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THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

BY LOUISE SCHEPLERN.

A pilgrim and a stranger,
I journey on my way;
I seek through tribulation
The light of perfect day;
Through thickest gloom and darkness
I see a gleam afar,
It beckons ever upward -
The bright and morning star.

My heaven never fails me,
Though long and drear the night;
Though clouds around me darken,
They cannot hide its light.
Courage, the day is dawning,
For lo! I see afar,
In all its radiant beauty,
The bright and morning star.

It guides me to the city
With twelve foundations fair,
Whose wall is purest jasper,
And set with jewels rare.
A grand untempled city,
Revealed to John of old,
Whose gates of pearl are numbered,
And streets are paved with gold.

Though oft my feet are weary,
So long and rough the road,
One stands beside me, patient,
To share my heavy load.
My faith can never fail me,
The while I see afar,
In all its radiant beauty,
The bright and morning star.

A WOMAN'S VOW.

BY MARY E. WOODSON.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HIDDEN HAND.

Sebastian Alvarez, the spoiled darling of the haut ton, at Berlin, dreamed away his existence in one unbroken round of pleasure. Masked balls and operas exhibited him as the handsomest knight amongst a hundred competitors. And court beauties smiled upon him in undisguised admiration as he moved, a born Adonis, through their ranks.

The accepted lover of a noble and beautiful lady, he could afford to smile haughtily down upon his rivals in the lists, and the young Spaniard's pride of birth was scarcely equal to his pride of bearing. He had but one ungratified wish at heart, and that was to induce his father to join him here. His love for his beautiful sister bordered upon idolatry, and he longed to introduce her into circles where she was so well qualified to shine, and where, in consequence, they might give and borrow lustre from each other.

The first rude awakening came to him in a double letter from father and sister, informing him of the betrothal of the latter to Earle Templeton.

"My father has surely gone mad," he muttered with a suppressed exclamation that sounded very much like an oath. "What would my beautiful Clave say to this untitled Englishman for a brother-in-law? The fellow, it is true, comes of that Devonshire Templeton stock, who trace their ancestry, with vaunting pride, back to those vulgar, beef-eating Saxons in the days of the Conqueror; but between him and the earldom there stand, we may wager, a hundred more direct claimants to the title. My father's heretofore vigorous brain is so immersed in those dead and gone issues in Spain, that he would sacrifice us both in the hope of gaining some slight co-operation on the part of England. Yet what can he hope from this fellow, who has nothing but his person and talents, though they, I will own, are rather more than respectable, to sustain him? No, no, it will never do. Nina must be taught at once that she should look higher than that, unless, Heaven forbid, she should be blinded by a vulgar attachment. At any rate, my father, when aroused, must see that he has erred, and put an end to the matter at once."

He re-read their letters, and his brow grew more overcast.

"Nina talks like a school girl, of his having saved her life," he muttered between his set teeth, "as though any boatman in the land might not have done that. He saved mine too—as I did a peasant girl from the dikes in Holland—but I did not ask her hand in marriage. She, however, is the daughter of our house, and must obey. Now for the more serious reasoning with my father."

Juan Alvarez wrote composedly yet feelingly of the proposed alliance. "In present eminence, and in money, I might have fairly calculated to dispose of my daughter to greater advantage," he said, "but with our crippled hands, what need have we of increased fortune? Strangers are already diving into our purse and robbing us of what we have. Men of rank equal to our own, are, in nine cases out of ten, devoid of ambition, except licentiously to squander patrimony; or at best are content with home affairs, having nothing to gain and all to lose, they are seldom led into foreign intrigues from a love of adventure; and when they are, we find them adventurers indeed scarcely more to be despised than mistrusted. Here is a man with the brain of a Wolsey, a Richelieu, or a Talleyrand, and with the impetus his friends may give him, when they find that he is backed by a princely fortune (he is no longer a moneyless adventurer whom every one avoids), there is no limit to the eminence which he may attain. In short, I had gravely viewed the case from every standpoint, having foreseen to what the acquaintance might lead; and, conscientiously, I do not think a more eligible offer for my daughter's hand could have been presented."

THE PARTING.

"WHAT IS IT, EARLE?" HER LITTLE HAND LAY ON HIS ARM. "YOU HAVE DONE NOTHING THAT RENDERS YOU UNWORTHY?"

"Was ever anything equal to the madness of this?" muttered the young man. "And here half of these young bloods are mad over that ill-done picture of her in my chambers! I must write at once."

A lengthy and rather vigorous epistle was the result of the next hour's labor. He entreated his father to reconsider the very grave matter before them, into which he was sure he had been indiscreetly hurried. Their own fortunes were at a peculiar crisis; as never in the history of a falling house was an occasion presented where distinguished alliances should be more eagerly sought, than by every member of the Alvarez household. All the talent in the world could not avail them unless that talent were combined with influence; and the young aspirant for his sister's hand was simply a shrewd barrister—perhaps entirely unknown and uncared for by the relations upon whose name he depended for a passport into respectable society. His sister's extreme youth, if nothing else, should forbid her having a voice in the matter. And her beauty, station, wealth and accomplishments might warrant them to hope even for a princely alliance. At any rate she must be allowed every chance, and introduced abroad.

If he was to have any influence in their councils, he urged that the affair at home might be hushed at once; and that his father and sister would join him without delay, at Berlin.

Having mailed the letter, and determined to wait at last until he should receive a response, he dismissed the subject from his mind.

The following, however, through the next day's mail, roused him still more thoroughly, and threw him into a tempest of passion. The letter bore neither date nor signature and ran thus:

"If you would save the falling honor of your father's house return to him at once. Like too many scholars and politicians of his day, engrossed with the phantasms of science, or of Utopian governments, he dreams away his existence, in fancied security here—while designing sharpers ever on the alert, are sent to rob him of his most priceless jewel.

"Your sister has formed the acquaintance of a low fellow of really disreputable connections, who has palmed himself off on your father as the descendant of an illustrious house, and is contemplating a matrimonial alliance with him, unless your pride and good sense are prompt to interfere.

"The genealogy of Earle Templeton will be furnished you, on your arrival here. If you are wise, come at once."

"And if I were the most arrant fool in Christendom, I would start within the hour," he exclaimed angrily, springing to his feet; "and did grant that I may not be too late."

His impatience on the route was clearly manifest to his unknown fellow-travellers. The angry frown upon his handsome features seemed to deepen with every mile. On the third evening he landed at N——, and proceeded at once to his father's residence.

Juan Alvarez, seated at his ormolu-and-gold writing-desk looked up in amazement from his son's late letter, to find that son in person before him.

"Sebastian!" he faltered, "what—what has happened? Never was I more astonished."

"Heaven knows it is time for me to be here," answered the son, forgetting in the intensity of his emotion, the usual courtesy shown by children of rank toward their parents, "when I learn that my sister is on the eve of being married to the grandest impostor in all England."

The father haughtily demanded an explanation of his son's undutiful conduct—and for answer, was handed the letter we have already seen.

"It is all the miserable trick of some jilted queen, or the venom of some disappointed man, as the tenor of this letter would seem to imply, whose relentless enmity this young man has provoked. No, no, Sebastian. I tell you we shall look in vain for Earle Templeton's like again. He is here daily, and the more I see of him the more I am convinced of this."

"Let him explain to us at once then who he is. Let him show us his pedigree," sneered Sebastian, haughtily, "and I will know whether the fellow is to be kicked out by myself or our butler."

"Sebastian, you dare not, you are beside yourself," cried the old man. Mr. Templeton is on the east end lawn with my daughter at this moment. You must promise me to be discreet; must at least treat him with courtesy, until he can satisfy all your scruples, as I am sure he will be able to do."

"Then you really know nothing of the fellow whatever?" said Sebastian, with a bitter laugh.

"My own eyes and senses convince me that he is a gentleman," faltered the old man, for the first time feeling some misgivings, lest for once in his life he may have been a little too credulous. "And—and they say he is nearly related to Athol Templeton."

"They say," repeated Sebastian, scornfully. "Come then, my father, you yourself shall see how thoroughly I can command my temper, except when I am in the company of my equals, and shall hear what account this young prince in disguise can give of himself."

Sebastian Alvarez strode toward the low cast window, and throwing it open stepped out into the court-yard. His father started up to issue a command to the young man to return, for he was alarmed lest the usual hot-headed impetuosity of the latter should lead him to commit some rash act that might be fatal in its consequences; but the haughty ease of the young aristocrat's bearing, as he moved away, reassured him in a measure; and, besides, he was a little anxious, without himself becoming questioner just now (he had decided that all that should be arranged when the marriage settlement was drawn up,) to hear what final account Earle Templeton could give of himself. He decided then quietly to follow his son and see what course affairs were likely to take before interference should be necessary on either side.

At an angle in the walk before him Sebastian Alvarez beheld his sister and Templeton upon the green sward earnestly engaged in a game of croquet. Templeton stood with his back toward them. Nina was in the act of striking the ball, and as she did so and looked up to see what line it had taken her eyes fell upon the intruder. Recognizing him in a moment, the cue dropped from her hands, and she sprang forward with a glad cry—sparkling, innocent joy beaming in every feature. In another instant her arms were about his neck.

"Dear, dear Sebastian, we shall be so happy now!"

He drew her fondly toward him, he could not do otherwise than that, for in any event he knew she was more sinned against than sinning, and pressed his lips to her brow. He released her then and stood for a moment in silence at her side.

Earle Templeton had recognized the visitor too, and was drawing near with that conscious dignity of manner that became him so well. He had felt himself unworthy of his betrothed only because he could not give her a full measure of affection; but peer in all else, he had never given her brother a thought in their matrimonial arrangements.

Fresh from the society of titled nobles, Sebastian Alvarez, despite his anger, could but reflect, at this moment, that he had nowhere seen in their midst a finer specimen of manhood than this unknown aspirant for his sister's hand. With the look that he had wished to express only cold disdain, there mingled in spite of himself, a surprised admiration for the singularly striking and impressive face, and stern, pitiless eyes that never seemed to have quailed before mortal gaze.

"Why are you here so much sooner than we expected?" said Nina, hastening to break the embarrassing pause. "And do you not recognize Mr. Templeton?"

"The hero who rescued us from a briny grave? Oh, yes," answered her brother, severely. "I think we thanked Mr. Templeton substantially by placing in his hands some considerable law business for ourselves and our friends. So, before I can take the hand he offers, I trust he will excuse me if I take the liberty of asking him a few pertinent questions in the presence of my father."

"I hope Señor Alvarez will make a nice distinction between pertinent and impertinent forms of interrogation," said Templeton, with a cold smile.

"My daughter," interrupted Juan Alvarez, with some perturbation, "we have neglected some little business matters which had best be arranged at once; and your presence can but be a restraint upon us. You will please go in, and we will follow you, I hope to the entire satisfaction of all parties, in a few moments."

She looked up at him with alarmed inquisitiveness, her habit of obedience, and the ominous uneasiness she could not banish, each struggling for supremacy. Another warning look from her father, however, had the desired effect; and only stopping at his side long enough to whisper, "For my sake, dear father, do not let Sebastian be rude, he would never forgive it," she turned quickly and took the walk that led to the house.

Profound silence was observed by the three, until her form had quite disappeared behind the shrubbery, and even then each seemed determined that the other should be the first to speak.

Finally Sebastian, as it became him, began:

"Mr. Templeton, a few days ago the astounding intelligence reached me abroad—intelligence that I would have deemed utterly fabulous had it not been communicated above my father's signature—that you were paying your addresses to Donna Nina Alvarez with the ultimate expectation of meeting with success. Even then I pronounced the letter a clever counterfeit, and hastened homeward in the confident expectation of proving it such. Your presence here, however, gives, I must say, a seeming credence to the statement."

"Your incredulity—the result, I suppose, of your recent associations, was at first at fault," answered Templeton, with another haughty smile. "I presume your father has already attested to the correctness of your information."

"Then, Mr. Templeton, I am present to hear what you have to say for yourself."

Earle Templeton leaned against the trunk of a centennial oak, outwardly unmoved, unless the swift darkening of his eyes from their usual steel-like brilliance to the intense blackness of night, as had frequently been observed, when his anger, instantaneous and pitiless had been aroused, might to an acute physiognomist have argued danger and evil to those about him.

"I don't think I have anything whatever to say," he answered, calmly; but those who were weatherwise would have known it was the calm before the storm.

"And yet you dare to aspire to my sister's hand?"

"Again you are correct."

"By heavens! dearly as I have loved her, I would pollard her with my own hands first!" exclaimed the young man, indignantly. "Who are you, sir?"

"A man who has had some hard lessons in life to learn; but never one so difficult as to command himself now."

"Tush, man!" said young Alvarez. "Should your life be spared and happy accident afford you a few more opportunities for genteel association, you will learn to control a temper which I see is bad. Yet you have boasted, they tell me, of your lineage. Give me the name of your grandfather, and I shall be encouraged to pursue the conversation."

"A wise man would have ended it long ago."

"Come, come," interrupted the old man, impatiently. "This bandying of words is unworthy of you both. Sebastian, as you hope for my forgiveness, I command you to be silent; and you, Mr. Templeton, hear me. My son has been favored with anonymous communications regarding you—such as we have received here—and it has naturally aroused his suspicions. You must forgive a great deal when you remember that it is the welfare of our dear Nina that he has at heart."

Sebastian's face colored angrily.

"Father!" he said, "if you wish me to be silent, you must leave my sister's name out of this discussion."

"We cannot do so," answered Alvarez, nervously, for a nameless something in Earle Templeton's face had rendered him timid as a woman; "but for the fact that Mr. Templeton expects to wed my daughter, we would have absolutely no right to interrogate him with regard to his connections at all. As it is, however," and he raised his eyes deprecatingly to Earle's darkening brow, "I am sure, Mr. Templeton, you will forgive me if I beg you to satisfy my son, and explain to us at once the exact social position of your late parents, and what it is at which your enemies are ever darkly hinting."

"Don Alvarez," said Templeton, and his low, musical voice had never wrought with greater power upon a jury than upon his hearers at this moment, "I must positively decline to recognize your son in any manner whatever in the negotiations between us. Your daughter is under your charge, and from you alone I have sought permission to woo her. To you alone, when a suiting opportunity is offered, I will answer any questions that I think you have a right to ask."

"Sebastian," replied the father, "you hear what Mr. Templeton says, and he is right. We will leave you here while I have some conversation with Mr. Templeton in my study."

The young man thus commanded turned indignantly on his heel and walked away, while the father, motioning to Templeton, led the way in silence back to the house.

"Now, Mr. Templeton," he resumed, when he had entered his private audience-room and closed the door behind them, "will you be kind enough to explain to me what is the degree of relationship between you and old Athol Templeton, Earl Templeton."

"None whatever," said Templeton, quickly, "not nearer than with yourself."

"No relation?" gasped the Spaniard. "I thought you were of his house, and took your name from him."

"So far you are strangely enough correct," answered Templeton, sadly. "I am of Athol Templeton's household, and bear the same name, but so far as I know I have not one drop of kindred blood in my veins."

"So far as you know! In God's name who were your parents then?" cried Juan Alvarez aghast.

"I do not know," replied the young man with a flush upon his proud features. "I have been assured by one who knew, but the secret died with him, (I allude to the late Carroll Tressylian) that my parents were the victims of a dark conspiracy, and that my father was most foully murdered—my mother being a ward of Athol Templeton, and that she died when I was born. Beyond this I know nothing—absolutely nothing. Once in my burning anxiety to know, I flew to Templeton and forced my way into the presence of the mad old earl, but I could extort nothing but curses and reproaches, and on my return I promised my guardian, Mr. Tressylian, that never on earth would I make the like attempt again. He assured me of one thing however, that the blood in my veins was not one whit less noble than that which flows through the rheumatic limbs of this crabbed old earl, but that I might just as well seek to stay the sun in his course as to find out who I was, while Athol Templeton lived."

"It is a sad story," said Alvarez, after an embarrassing silence of a few moments, "and you will excuse me, Mr. Templeton, for saying so—a story enveloped in a great deal of romantic mystery. I—I am afraid it may not be so fair as you have been led to suppose. My remotest family connections have never allied themselves with people of doubtful nobility. I am afraid we have been a little indiscreet, Mr. Templeton. I am sure Sebastian will have more reason than ever to think so. I know this Earl of Templeton, and you must at least permit me to question him with regard to your birth, ere my daughter is allowed to see you again."

"I have neither power nor wish to refuse you permission, though I am confident you will gain no additional information," answered Templeton, mournfully. "But, sir, remember, pray, that I am the accepted lover of your daughter, and have a right at least to explain to her my position before I leave your house to-day. It may be," and for the first time his voice faltered, "it may be some time ere I see her again. I shall be satisfied to speak to her here in your presence."

"I hardly think that necessary, Mr. Templeton," replied Don Alvarez, with increasing coolness. "Nina is an obedient daughter, and I can explain all to her. I assure you that justice shall be done to you, and that you shall hear from us again. My daughter loves you, sir, and I have her happiness to consider. In the meantime you have only to be quiet."

"And to bid you good-evening," said Templeton, rising. "I shall, however, take the liberty of writing to your daughter."

"I had rather you would not," answered Alvarez. "The butler will show you out, Mr. Templeton;" and the young man turned away with a heavy heart. Nina Alvarez had never seemed to him so dear as now, when there was a prospect of her being lost to him forever. Every look and word of hers, so full of the most ardent attachment, yet so eloquent of woman's holiest refinement, came back to him now to wring his heart.

A few stars were already twinkling in the firmament as he came forth, and he looked up at them with a weary earnestness of expression that had in it nothing of the grand strength he had displayed an hour before.

"Oh," he thought wildly, "never had I dreamed that woman could be so dear to me again. Is love destined to prove only a fatal curse to my whole existence?"

"Earle!"

The gate was before him, and against one of its pillars leaned Nina Alvarez. Her face seemed whiter than the dress she wore.

"You are going, and without one word of farewell to me!" The plaintive sadness in her voice smote him to the heart.

"My soul's own, it was your father's wish, and in his house I had no alternative but to obey. And, darling, thank Heaven for this one word of parting; only trust me, and I shall yet win my way to your side through an army of opposition."

"What is it, Earle?" Her little jewelled hand lay on his arm. "You have done nothing that renders you unworthy?"

"What says your heart, Nina?"

"That yours, my darling, has never known one throb of fear or guilt. I could trust you to the world's end and forever."

"You are right, my Nina. It is some quibble about equality of rank. And you will wait patiently until it is settled?"

"Until death shall part us."

Wearily the beautiful head had drooped upon his arm. He caught her to his heart, imprinted a kiss that had in it something of holy benediction upon her brow, when, as if unable to trust himself further, he tore himself away, and left her standing alone for the moment, stunned and powerless, gazing after his retreating form.

And as he walked on under the stars, that seemed so far off and cheerless on that desolate winter's evening, those words came back to him like the voice of Fate—

"Until death shall part us."

CHAPTER XXV.

ATHOL TEMPLETON.

"Then it is rather worse than I surmised," said Sebastian Alvarez, when he had listened to his father's account of the recent interview. "The man cannot give the name even of his own father. What need is there of further discussion? We should take Nina abroad, and drop the disgraceful subject at once and forever."

"But she loves him," said the old man softly, "and all our efforts can never make her forget him, Sebastian. I cannot wilfully punish my darling child. She is the image of her lost mother, and is far dearer to my heart than all the ambitious hopes of preferment that I could ever cherish in this world. Could you blight her young life forever, without an effort to justify them?"

"I have been taught, sir, that I should dig my grave with my own hands, rather than sign away my honor," said the young man resolutely.

"And I would not have you forget it," replied his father, as he looked with gratified pride upon his handsome and gifted son. "Only, Sebastian, she is a woman, and we must be merciful to her. I have promised the young man, too, that justice shall be done him."

"Nor shall that be forgotten," answered the other, with a look that might have alarmed the old man. "And in the meanwhile what course will you pursue?"

"I shall first write to Athol Templeton."

"Letters are uncertain. Why not go to him, or, as you may be needed here, permit me to go?"

"Well thought of," answered Alvarez promptly. "I will give you a letter of introduction, and you shall start to-morrow."

On the following day Sebastian Alvarez left N—— at an early hour, and took the rail for the nearest point to "Templeton," the family seat of Athol Templeton, the old Devonshire earl.

He had to pass the night at an inn, but at the earliest moment that could be allowed, he took a hired vehicle and drove over the highway toward the time-honored seat of the Templetons.

"An ancient and stately pile assuredly," muttered the young Spaniard, as its dark gables and towers rose up above the surrounding forests. "This must have been some old abbey in the days of monkdom."

Such in very truth had Templeton been, in those old feudal days when even the sword was less mighty than the gown—a grand, old Dominican monastery, of equal renown for the abundance of its revenue and the sanctity of its order; and though in late days the antique Gothic structure that might have defied decades of centuries from the wear of time, had been unable to withstand the blast of petronels and the devouring tongue of flames remorselessly kindled by the satraps of Cromwell, whose motto had been "Slay, and spare not," where any reverence for the ancient regime might linger, it had still a stately and solemn beauty; for the Templetons now dead and gone had still left here imperishable records of their princely wealth and right royal tastes, and the cunning of master architects had vied with each other to leave here a monument of their art, enduring as holy St. Peter's at Rome, or that old dome in London which has rendered the name of Christopher Wren immortal.

It was a chill, uncertain morning; the sun went in and out, and the shadows seemed to play at hide-and-seek through the aisles of the trees, in whose dense branches the wild fowl still lingered. The pools were frozen over, and the dead leaves had a ghostly rustle as Sebastian Alvarez drove through them.

He got out at the keeper's lodge, and followed his guide in silence through the intricate park that still shrouded the grand entrance. A deer sprang up here and there, frightened from its covert, or a gray heron shook its wings preparatory to flight. It was a solitary, royal old place, where the first Plantagenet might have basked in the smile of a Fair Rosamond, never fearing that the basilisk eyes of the hated Eleanor would fathom their retreat; or where the fugitive Stuart might have defied the bullets of the Ironsides.

The boughs of the witch-elms, tossing to and fro, threw a shadow so dense upon the blazoned windows, on the pointed arches, and down the aisles and ivy-covered cloisters, that it almost seemed as if the night still lingered in sympathetic sadness here.

The young man still pressed on, under the dark elm-boughs that lifted themselves now, and revealed to him the antique carvings of old Norman builders, and the deep, heraldic blazonries, with the motto of the Templetons stained upon the glass.

The bell of the court-yard rang out sharply under his touch, and after ten minutes or more of impatient waiting a drowsy porter appeared, and stared in blank astonishment at the handsomely-dressed intruder.

"What be your wish, sir?"

"To see Earl Athol Templeton."

"Impossible," said the man. "The heard ha' not seen a visitor in a twelvemonth."

"Then it is time he should be afforded such a diversion," said young Alvarez, composedly. "My father and the earl were once dear friends, and I am sure the latter would be angry if I were shut out," he continued, handing a gold piece in lieu of further argument to the man. "Come, show me into an ante-room, and summon an attendant."

The groom of the chambers appeared and shook his head still more doubtfully.

"The earl is far from well, and he has seen no one but his physicians for a long time," he objected.

Sebastian tried the effect of another guerdon.

"Is your master ill?" he asked.

"No, sir, not positively ill," was the response. "He has just finished his breakfast, and is in his fantoeil before the fire now, but he is never well, and if your business should not be entirely pleasant I might lose my place."

"You will at least take in my card and a brief letter of introduction," said the visitor, in a tone of authority, which went far toward convincing the servant of his importance. "And the earl himself will then decide whether or not he will grant an audience."

The man demurred a moment, took the letter, and went out.

Sebastian Alvarez paced the room impatiently. He began to fancy that he had been forgotten or wilfully hoaxed. He looked at his watch and found that an hour had elapsed. He was about impatiently to ring an inner bell, when the door opened, and the domestic again appeared.

"This way, if you please, sir."

"The earl will then see me?"

"He has so ordered."

The servant preceded him in silence down a long corridor, across a chamber that might have been the audience-place of the Lord Abbot in monastic days, into another oriel-chamber, with hangings of faded crimson velvet, broidered with armorial escutcheons in dead gold, where, before a brisk fire—the only thing in all the apartment that seemed to have any life about it—sat, in a cushioned chair, Athol Templeton, Earl of Templeton.

The light from the fire—it was all they had, for the windows were still closed and heavily darkened—fell garishly upon the huge brass andirons, on the gilt table, and gold flagon of Rhenish wine before the earl's chair. It threw a wan, unearthly pallor over the little wezen face of the little wezen earl himself, as he lay back among his cushions, his feet in slippers, wrapped in his seed-pearl broidered and sable-lined dressing gown.

The shrunken eyes twinkled, however, with a sharp look of intelligence, and there was a rustle among the cushions, as he looked again at the letter in his hand, and then up at the strange visitor before him.

"Do not rise, I beg of you," said Sebastian Alvarez, as he stepped forward with easy grace; "the son of Juan Alvarez may dispense with such an exaction when he stands before the noble Earl Templeton, and dares flatter himself that he is not a disagreeable intruder."

"Be seated then, young man," answered Athol Templeton, "for in truth my feet are no longer swift to do my bidding, as when your father and I once walked the ramparts of Corunna. Draw nearer to me, that I may see your face. Ah, so! Yes I see the same haughty pride, and perhaps as insatiable an ambition; though Juan Alvarez tells me here, that his hopes and happiness are alike concentred in his children."

"My father is much changed—greatly changed," answered Sebastian. "But he does not forget that he bears the name of Alvarez; nor are his affections confined exclusively to his children. He still speaks feelingly of Earl Athol Templeton."

"The Athol Templeton that he knew is dead," answered the old man, bitterly, "while unfortunately a curse of bitter remembrances and aching pains is left. Intervals of quiet even like the present are rare with me, and of short duration; so, I must warn you, young man, that if you still think it in my power to serve you—for I can scarcely imagine your tardy visit to me to be one of simple courtesy—you had best speak at once, ere we are interrupted by the spasms of pain that rend me, and make the sight of complacent good health in the veriest stranger about me an unbearable aggravation."

"It is in truth a matter of vital importance to my name, which has rendered it imperative that I shall seek an interview with you," answered Sebastian Alvarez, while a heavy frown returned to his brow. "Know then, sir, that since my father's sojourn in England, an unlucky chapter of accidents placed him under considerable obligations to a man of passingly fair prospects in life—a young barrister of rising fame, and consequent talents above the average—a man by adoption only bearing the noble name of Templeton, who, availing himself of my absence, has palmed himself off upon my too-credulous father, as a descendant of the great Earls of Templeton, has made love to my sister, and has asked her hand in marriage."

"And the young man's name?" faltered the old earl, turning—as Sebastian Alvarez could but notice—strangely white, and trembling in every limb.

"He represents himself as the son of a former ward of Earl Athol Templeton—was, during his minority, under the guardianship of the late Carroll Tressylian, and bears the name of Earle Templeton."

"My God!"

This simple spasmodic gasp escaped, as it seemed involuntarily, from Athol Templeton's lips as he sat for several moments staring wildly upon his visitor, without power of motion. Then his face grew convulsed with pain, and he threw out his hands spasmodically toward the table.

"Some wine, in the name of Heaven!"

Sebastian Alvarez, thoroughly alarmed, hurriedly poured out a goblet of the golden Rhenish, and held it to his lips. The old earl drank eagerly, and fell back among his cushions. He had closed his eyes and looked so like death, that his visitor was about to ring for assistance, when once more a convulsive movement stayed his hand.

"Be still."

The old man tottered to his feet and stood before him.

"And this Earle Templeton wishes to wed the daughter of Juan Alvarez?"

"Yes."

"And your father has sent you to me?"

"Yes."

"Tell him, then," he almost shrieked in a voice of terrible passion, "that this bogus Earle Templeton is the son of a pet dairy maid, whom my wife once chose to have about her here, and who rendered herself infamous by a life of lawlessness, if not of murder, and that she died just in time to save herself from the worst of earthly punishments for all her misdeeds. Through the whim of that fool Carroll Tressylian—accursed, obstinate fool that he was—the child was given the name he now bears, and educated with all the care of a gentleman's son. I have heard that the boy has striking talents, and a most pleasing exterior. So much the worse for him; so much the worse. Such chance gifts of fate were the ruin of Perkin Warbeck, Lambert Simnel, and a host of other plausible impostors. There, I have given his true history to Juan Alvarez. More than I had ever thought I could repeat to mortal man. Now go, my spasm is coming. Or stay—I will ring."

He took a step forward unaided, reached out his long, bony hand, and seized the bell-wire just within reach.

"James Rouncewell," he said, as the usher appeared, "you introduced this son of my old friend into my presence?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then show him the door, and follow him at once with bag and baggage," he hissed in his ears as the visitor bowed himself out, "or I will have you chucked from the highest loophole in the tower."

Such was the information regarding Earle Templeton with which Sebastian Alvarez travelled back to N——.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EARLE TEMPLETON'S DISMISSAL.

Nina Alvarez had been prostrated with a low fever, and in her delirium called by the hour upon her lost love.

"You have proved nothing against him—nothing," she cried, with a plaintiveness that caused her father to sob aloud. "The mad old earl tells his own venomous story; and his only friend is dead. He is true and noble, and you shall not tear me from him. All your efforts but increase my love. Convince me that he is personally unworthy, and then indeed I could forget him, could despise him, for he would have played a cruel part."

And Sebastian Alvarez hearing, swore vengeance against this man for the trouble he had brought upon them.

Earle Templeton's servant rang at the door for tidings of Nina Alvarez's health, and was rudely dismissed by her brother.

"Tell your master that I dismiss you without answer, and that if he sends you here again you will be thrashed, and himself charged with trespass."

The message was delivered exact to Templeton, and received without comment. His face was shrouded in an impenetrable coldness that had the chilling effect of ice to those about him.

Nina Alvarez was slowly recovering when the following letter was received by Don Juan Alvarez:—

"Your daughter fancies that she is dying of a broken heart, and that you and your son are guilty of cruel injustice toward her lover. It is no wonder that she regards him in the light of a martyr, when you wilfully blind her to his own gross crimes, and charge him before her only with the sins of others. Show him to her in his true colors and she will, she must despise him as you do, for she still has the Alvarez blood in her veins. He does not attempt to disguise the passion he still cherishes for Violette Worthington—the pretty sister of a half-pay officer in her majesty's service; and while he yet plans to make Nina Alvarez his wife, for the sake of the position and fortune she will bring him, he is equally determined to retain the other as his chere amie, and promises to lavish upon her the wealth secured through you. We are ready to convince you that these are no groundless charges. As soon as your daughter shall have sufficiently recovered to be able to have the proofs placed before her, we are prepared to do so in a way that she will no longer question. Should she challenge us to do so, address R. S. V. P., Box 3, N——."

"I do," cried Nina, springing up with energy. "I have still, as he says, the blood of my fathers in my veins, and I would put him resolutely out of my thoughts could I believe him unworthy. But that is not possible. No, it is not possible."

From the very hour that the above note was shown her, she began to improve.

"Write to the fellow, since we must so condescend, and offer him suitable rewards to furnish you the information he has promised, and then let us leave this accursed country forever," said Sebastian.

"I will, at once," replied his father, in more sadness than anger, "though for my life I cannot see why any mere stranger should be so bitter against him."

"It is, of course, someone whom he has likewise wronged," answered the son. "At any rate, we have nothing to do with that. Our only aim should be to awaken Nina from her absurd infatuation. Of necessity he is as dead to her as though he were buried a thousand fathoms in the sea, but it will be a satisfaction to make her scorn to do honor to his memory."

The next day Alvarez wrote a few guarded words to the address furnished, asking for information, and offering a liberal reward to the informant. On the following morning the response came:

"You do me gross injustice in offering me a reward," wrote this unknown correspondent, emphatically. "No money on earth could induce me to the steps I am taking, for then I should seem to myself to be bribed. It is a part of a just debt I owe one whose happiness in this life he has forever destroyed. His attentions to Violette Worthington are not so open as of old, but they have a far deeper meaning. Their meetings are now clandestine, and a regular correspondence is maintained. The friends of her brother have warned him in vain. He declares to her that he will give up Miss Alvarez first, but he does not see why he should lose either. The world is large enough for a man of means to keep two women whom he loves from any insulting contact with each other.

"The enclosed is a part of a letter addressed by the lover of Miss Alvarez to the chere amie referred to, when she had reproached him with entertaining another love, perhaps stronger than that he had professed for her, and which he emphatically denies. Miss Alvarez can have no hesitation in recognizing his peculiar writing."

Then followed a garbled extract from the journal of Earle Templeton, which we have already given. The said extract, however, had been so naturally copied and so cleverly altered that Templeton himself, without comparing the two, could not have sworn that it was not his own writing. The reader will recall the similarity of form and dissimilarity of fact.

"'You ask me if I love Nina Alvarez. As Heaven is my judge, I do not. I had thought my heart-strings broken when our cruel destinies snapped asunder those other fetters, stronger than the seven green withes of Delilah, with which you had bound me; but again there have been vibrations to-day that no severed chord could feel. If I do not love you still and exclusively, I shall never in this world know what that tender passion is. But the die is cast, and in common generosity to the other, the efforts of my life must be to make her believe.

"'Was I selfishly mercenary?

"'I swear it, no. If I could not share that wealth with you, it would be as so much sand beneath my feet. And yet, to what heights will not her fortune help me to mount. No man, in addition, is ever properly to be trusted in the statesmanship of a nation until he has assumed the responsibility of a 'paterfamilias' amongst his people. We feel that a man would add bulwarks to the government under which his children are to live in common with our own. He is then, you will see, greater, if not happier, married.

"'The desire too, to be proud of one's possessions, is an instinct natural to the human breast. Nina Alvarez has the "vieux sang" of the patrician, great wealth and undisputed beauty.

"'What more could I ask, since cruel fate denied me the fortune with which I might have taken you to my side, and disdained the smiles or frowns of every other woman in the universe?'"

Never was there a cleverer imitation of another's writing. Officers in bank would never have questioned the identity of the signature.

Nina Alvarez grew faint and sick.

"Should your daughter still doubt," the correspondent had added in conclusion, "she may see with her own eyes. Your son and Miss Alvarez have both seen the girl who has sacrificed her good name for the love of this unprincipled villain. In room number four, second floor, —— street, Temple Bar, lives a solitary old woman—a worthy object of charity for the wealthy, who would have starved ere this, but for the unaided support of the writer. A visit to her would be one of charity indeed. If paid this afternoon about eight o'clock, Miss Alvarez would not question the evidences of her own senses."

"Of course that cannot be thought of," said her father. "You must now be satisfied that he is unworthy of another thought. And to-morrow we leave for Paris."

The girl turned away weeping piteously. Sebastian Alvarez followed her with a dark frown upon his face.

"Would you like to put on a disguise, and go with me to carry alms to this old woman?" he asked.

"Yes; for then I should see with my own eyes."

"And you will promise to leave England without a murmur?"

"Yes."

"Then I will call for you at the appointed hour."

CHAPTER XXVII.

VIOLETTE WORTHINGTON ALSO VISITS THE "TEMPLE BAR" OF N——.

Miss Worthington sat alone in her chamber in the boarding-house at which her brother had found quarters for her—not without some difficulty—near to the barracks at which he was stationed.

Proprietors of boarding-houses are generally shy of single women without a constant protector about them. They are apt to be a little troublesome—especially if they are pretty—about the use of the parlor, extra fires and lights burned through two-thirds of the night, and the front door open all the while. Miss Worthington was by no means a pleasant exception in this way. The piano went banging at all hours of the night and day, and gay, rollicking, noisy visitors sounded as though they would bring the walls about their ears; for army acquaintances are not proverbially the most orderly.

Miss Worthington, too, had been "raised in an atmosphere of men"—as she had been heard coolly to boast; and was, as Mrs. Primrose, the landlady, had whispered to her neighbors, decidedly "horsey" in her manners. Her laugh was too loud and ringing; her walk was a cross between a swing and a strut; and she was never so well pleased as when galloping at full speed, on the most unmanageable of horses, over the country. She had big, bold, sparkling black eyes—a marvellous wealth of hair of a yet inkier hue, regular features, and a superb figure. She had consequently been much admired, and we are afraid, not very discreet, though she still held her position in society.

There was a spirited dash about her which most men admire, even if they do not like to see it in their sisters, wives or daughters; and which, far more than her beauty, drew the men of the world about her.

In the recklessness of his career some months before, Earle Templeton had seen her and made her acquaintance. His Vandyke face with its strange blending of power and repose had from the first wrought a singular charm over this wayward and impulsive woman. She did not swear to him as many women of her type would have done, that her heart had never thrilled with a single emotion of love until she met him. There was too much of honest feeling about her yet, for that, but she vowed, with tears in her eyes, and alas, with perfect truth, that she had never loved so well, nor ever could again in this world; and, believing, he had had marked compassion on her. He found her well read, vivacious and entertaining, and knowing himself how much greater injustice other men so circumstanced might have done her, he was perhaps not considerate enough about the opinions of the world; or it may be that he liked Violette Worthington for the amusement she afforded him, and that in his new-born selfishness begotten of his mistrust for woman he did not care. It was even true that a former lover of hers, and one whom she had never distinguished with the slightest mark of favor, had taken it upon himself to warn Templeton that his name had been unpleasantly associated with that of the girl, and that if all grounds were not removed for such comment, he should feel called on to lay the matter before her brother. But Templeton had dismissed him with a few scathingly satirical remarks, and had heard no more from him.

Perhaps the cause had been removed, for just at the time when report was at its worst, Templeton had begun to visit the great heiress, Nina Alvarez, with the results we have seen, and had, in consequence, almost entirely dropped Miss Worthington. The sweets of their occasional encounters were not without the gall of her reproaches, and he had soon told her, with a kindness that had melted all resentment from her heart, that the familiarity of their acquaintance must end. Women are seldom reasoning creatures—never where their affections are concerned—so, mes freres, you who have been similarly treated may imagine the difficulties of the situation.

Miss Worthington had visibly lost spirit. "No great harm for the matter of that," Mrs. Primrose had averred; "but the young woman makes no effort to hide her attachment for a man who has coolly thrown her aside for another and a wealthy sweetheart. She had the nerve of the strongest man when she first came here, and now she bursts into tears and rushes to her room if one but looks at her."

This was but too true. Absence had not conquered Miss Worthington's attachment. On the other hand it had strengthened as time wore on, and she had ample leisure to contrast her peerless love with the rough spirits about her.

Lewis Hartman had secretly resented some remarks of Earle Templeton, addressed to him as a witness in the trial of Ralph Thornton for the murder of Carroll Tressylian, and hence the more eagerly joined with his wife in her plans to be avenged on the relentless prosecutor of her brother. Without her incentives, he was far less scrupulous in the means he employed, and not infrequently found it advisable to screen them from her. He had sworn to her that Earle Templeton should not marry the woman whom they supposed he loved, and from a love of intrigue and villainy, if nothing more, he was determined to accomplish his object if it were in the power of mortal to do so.

He had secretly kept Miss Worthington posted with regard to Templeton's attentions to Nina Alvarez, and had in every way endeavored to arouse her jealousy and provoke her indignation. The first was an easier task than he would have wished. In the latter he had signally failed. Increasing melancholy on her part was the single result of his endeavors. The time had now come when all must be hazarded on a single throw of the die. He made one more bold venture, and as is too often the case in this world, success attended unscrupulous villainy.

It was on the afternoon referred to in the beginning of this chapter, that Miss Worthington sat alone in her chamber, absorbed in a revery of bitter memories. Her brother's regiment had been ordered to a distant post, and might receive commands to depart at any hour. Yet she had not seen Templeton for weeks, and could then never calculate to look upon his face again.

"Cruel!" she murmured. "He might at least have called to bid me good-bye."

A knock at the door had been repeated for the third time, when she brushed the tears from her eyes, and bade the unseen visitor enter. It was a servant bearing a note, and as she looked at it a vivid flush overspread her features. It was in Earle Templeton's familiar handwriting. She broke the seal with a trembling hand, and read—

"My Own Darling:—Your brother's regiment has received marching orders, and will leave to-morrow. The thought of parting from you is more than I can bear. Sweetest Violette, ambitious interests have led me to seek the society of another, but I know now that I would renounce the whole world rather than lose you. I am ill, really ill, my darling. Come to me for a few moments, that I may arrange in what manner I am to follow you, and live eternally in the light of your smile. I would not ask this if it were possible for me to come to you; but I am far too sick. There can be no indiscretion in this. You can put on some slight disguise, and follow the servant without ever being observed. Besides, ladies come here at any time on matters of business. I swear to you that you shall not regret it.

"Do not disappoint me, or I shall conclude that you care nothing for me. Come at once. E. T."

Women of less character than Violette Worthington possessed might have hesitated to comply with the request contained in this note, for the sake of appearances, if for nothing else; but to her such considerations were unfortunately always secondary. Her darling, her idol, was ill, and had asked her to come to him, only to bid him good-bye, when they might be parting forever; and no consideration short of absolute disgrace should keep her back. She believed that she could readily escape observation, and she knew Earle Templeton well enough to feel that she could trust herself with him.

To throw on a simple dress of sombre hue and wrap herself in a shawl and veil, were the work of a moment. She passed out unobserved, and the servant in waiting, previously directed, as she knew, moved on in front of her. A brisk walk soon took her to the foot of the stairway, at the head of which was Templeton's office.

"First door above, to the right," whispered the bogus servant, who was no other than Hartman himself. "You'll see his name. Go right in." And he moved briskly away, leaving her alone on the pavement.

For once in her life she felt thoroughly nervous and timid. She dared not linger where she was; so, drawing her veil more closely, she hurriedly ascended the steps, and seeing Templeton's name, pushed open the door and entered. As it closed behind her, a second couple arriving at the steps, came up, too, and passed into another room just to the rear.

The last arrivals were Sebastian and Nina Alvarez.

Violette Worthington advancing, as she had expected, to meet Earle Templeton, stood face to face with an entire stranger. The gentleman motioned her to a seat, and saying that Mr. Templeton would be in in a few minutes, passed out. It was James Harrycourt, and the young man shook his head as he descended the stairs.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes, half an hour had elapsed, and night was coming on. Miss Worthington sat shivering in her chair. At last, however, she started up like a frightened hare.

The door of an inner room had opened, and Earle Templeton, seeing a lady, advanced negligently toward her. In an instant his face grew pitiless with a stern anger.

"Miss Worthington, what folly, what madness is this?" he cried. "You would be ruined if seen here. What has happened that could lead you to this step?"

And for all answer she began to sob nervously. Her agitation was so great that she had failed to observe his surprise of words and manner.

"I thought you were sick," she faltered. "The servant told me you were here, and you know we leave to-morrow."

A great pity took possession of him. He knew how he had once suffered, and he felt assured that this girl loved him.

"You ought not to have come," he said. "What would your brother say if he were to find you here? It might lead to a difficulty that would involve his life or mine, perhaps both. Come, you must leave at once. Barrycourt must have seen you here. Calm yourself, Violette, I beseech you. I promise you that I will call after tea to bid you good-bye. You must not remain here another instant."

He took her hand and advanced toward the door. He never questioned but that this visit had been entirely impulsive and voluntary on her part—nor she but that he had sent for her. She only supposed that he had grown alarmed for her safety.

"Good-bye," she whispered as she stood for a moment just outside the door, and lifted her large eyes, filled with tears, to his. "You will come, or my heart must break."

He was not infallible. No man under the circumstances could have been. He stooped and kissed the red lips.

"I have promised you that I would," he answered. "There, go in Heaven's name! It is already late for you to be out alone; but, under the circumstances, I had best not go with you."

Had either of them surmised that they had been brought together through the nefarious scheming of others, they might have been on their guard, but unfortunately they did not. And Violette Worthington passed down the stairway, and Templeton re-entering his rooms, locked the door behind him.

"Take me home, oh! darling brother, take me home," sobbed Nina Alvarez. "You are right. I had never dreamed that there could be such depth of falsehood in any human being. And oh! let us leave England at once. The very atmosphere poisons me."

"Yes," he answered. "My carriage is below. But I shall not leave England," he whispered to himself as he passed Templeton's door, "until I have settled with you, my gay Lothario, for old and new. I shall chastise you as I would a treacherous hound."

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 16.)

☞ The following sad incident is related to have occurred in Moscow, Russia, concerning a young betrothed couple. The girl was of great beauty, the lover was the son of rich parents, and on her birthday obtained leave to celebrate it with fetes to be given at her father's house. The first evening at dinner the young man drank deeply, and became intoxicated, when his conduct was so violent that the guests all retired, and he was with difficulty conveyed to his father's house. The next day, however, he presented himself at the ball he had arranged, and danced with his betrothed. When the dance was ended the young lady requested the band to play a favorite air, and retired alone to the balcony, whence immediately afterward was heard the sound of firearms, and the young lady was found to have shot herself through the heart with a revolver she had concealed. A letter found upon her assigned the discovery of her intended husband's brutal nature as the motive for the act.

NORA'S LOVERS.

An Episode of Irish Life.

BY MILLIE W. CARPENTER.

"And that is all you have to say to me?"

"That is all I have to say to you. Or, indeed, since you are so very pressing,"—she smiles a pretty, mocking smile—"I will add two more words—good-bye!"

A great silence follows after this. The girl stands with her fair head thrown back, looking straight out at the prospect from the window. The low, red sunbeams, catching an angle of the wall, light the gray stones wondrously. She almost fancies she can hear the beat of the sea on the bold rocks beyond.

Good-bye! It is all so still, so still, except for her companion's heavy breathing as he stares dumbly in her face. She gets impatient at last, and sweeps him a low courtesy.

"Good-bye, Captain Donald," and she turns to leave him.

This rouses him; a sudden fire flashes from his eyes.

"Stop!" he cries, breathing heavily as he flings himself into a chair. "Stop!" and at the tone he uses she wavers irresolute, with her face half turned away from him.

"I will speak. I will have a hearing. I—" he draws his hand wearily across his forehead. "I came back to you to-day, after two years of exile, with the old love, the old hopes in my heart, as fresh and sweet as they were the morning they were born. You remember that morning by Loch Earne, Nora? the kiss you gave me as we stood looking out over the bright water, when you promised to be my wife?"

She does not answer; she only stares at him with wide, wild eyes.

"And you will not hear me," he goes on excitedly. "You only say it is too late; you would send me away with a cold good-bye."

"And I repeat to you it is too late," she answers firmly, though her lips quiver. "It is too late, and it is better for you to go now. Good-bye again, Captain Donald!" and she holds out her hand.

Captain Donald does not heed her; he is looking at her steadfastly, with calm, introspective eyes.

"How beautiful you are, Nora. How beautiful you were that day when you promised to be my wife. The wind blew back your bright hair." He passes his hand caressingly over her yellow curls. "You gave me a tress which was tossed back across my lips, and I have kept it ever since."

He unfolds a bit of silken paper, and shows her the coiled ring of gold within.

"Do you see it, and these ashes of a rose? You gave me a rose from your hair that day, Nora. Through those long months of exile, through trouble and disappointment and long suffering—through all the weal and woe I suffered for Ireland's sake, Nora—your love and these mementos have been always with me! I should have died but for them, and for the thought of your truth to me."

"Hush!" cries Nora, hoarsely, putting her hand over her ears. "Why do you speak of these things now? I tell you it is too late. I—I am to be married soon."

She does not look at him as she says it, but turns her face away.

"Married!" A great, hot flush mounts to Captain Donald's forehead, and then fades slowly. "Married, Nora? To whom?"

"Married!" Nora turns on him angrily. "Why did you come back to me, then, and tell me this, and begin to talk of those old days? I had forgotten them. I had," she repeats louder, as if in defiance of something her own memory whispers her, "and I was growing to be contented with my lot. I should have been happy soon, quite happy—" Her voice breaks down.

"You are not happy, then—not quite happy?" and though Captain Donald stands up and coldly aloof from her, a quick, keen ray of hope shoots to his heart and nestles warmly there.

"How could I be?" Nora's lovely Irish eyes upraised to his are streaming with hot tears. "I—I did not mean to tell you—I was too proud to tell you before; but I was tricked—duped; they told me you had fled with your wife—a beautiful girl; that you had gone to America, and would never come back again."

"My wife!" In the midst of the jealous pain and resentment that is racking him, a calm smile of scorn struggles to Captain Donald's lips. "You were not with me, Nora, therefore you should have known that I had no wife when I was skulking from place to place, seeking shelter and not daring to accept it—an Irish rebel always with a price set upon my head."

"I think I was mad, quite mad for a time," she goes on, looking into the dark beauty of his face with a gentle wistfulness. "I was ill, and when I got better they took me away. I never saw the papers; I never heard your name mentioned; I was sick, worn, weary of life. Oh, how unutterably weary!"

"You might have had a little faith in me," he says, coldly, and his stern voice seems to strike like a thunderbolt into the dark night of her grief and bring out of it the plunging storm.

"I know, I know," she cries, wringing her hot hands together; "but I was desperate; I was wild with misery. Then Arthur came back and asked me again to marry him. He had asked me many times before, and I had always refused—always. But now I thought it did not matter. He promised to take me away to Italy, and I thought I could be happy. I honestly tried to be happy; to forget everything. But I could not; it was always coming back to me, and now you have come. Oh, how can I bear it? I love you! I love you!"

Her voice rises wildly as she stretches out her hands to him, and in a moment all Captain McDonald's fierce resentment has vanished before the unutterable pathos of her gesture. He takes her in his arms; he holds her to his heart and showers passionate kisses upon her face, and her bright, falling hair.

"My darling, my Nora! my poor child." He repeats it over and over. "You shall never marry that man; such a tie shall never hold you, never!"

Nora does not reply in words. She nestles closely to him—closer yet, and leans her pretty curl-tossed head against his heart.

"You see we cannot do without each other," Donald goes on, lifting her face that he may cover it with proud and happy kisses.

"I cannot do without you, you are unhappy without me. Why I cannot begin to tell you, my darling, all the misery, the doubt of those long sad days in which I heard nothing from you, and had nothing but my entire faith in you to keep me from despair."

"I did not hear from you," she wails, "not once. Oh, who could have been so cruel as to keep your message back?"

"Can you not see?" Donald answers,

with a swift clinching of the hands. "Can you not see that he is the doubly-damned traitor?"

She only answers with a little piteous cry of horror.

"I could not bear it longer," Donald goes on. "I came back. I skulked from place to place again for the bare chance of looking into your eyes once more. And oh, my darling, last night I lay here like a dog, close to the shadow of the wall, with my eyes riveted on these windows for a sight of you. Oh, blessed fate, you came once; you pressed your face against the glass, and looked up at the stars. Oh, my darling, I said then—'She is this king of Donald!' I hugged that thought to my heart with fierce joy."

Nora starts away from him. She struggles passionately to free herself from the silver chains that he is forging so deftly, so swiftly about her.

"Oh, hush!" she cries, pleadingly. "I must not listen to you longer. I tell you, truly, Donald, this must be the last time that we meet."

His happy arms fall from around her. In his first great shock of bitter mortification he is too proud to plead; too angry to be just.

"I tell you I am to be married to Arthur soon; not to-morrow, but next day. Why, the wedding-dress is made. The wedding guests are already here. Oh, what if they should come in now and find you here? You must not stay; every moment is fraught with peril. Oh, Donald, my love, say farewell—a last farewell, and go before you are discovered."

Donald laughs aloud. "Discovered! Do you think my life is worth anything to me now? Let them discover me. I am a proscribed rebel with a price set upon his head! Let Arthur give me up, and then claim the reward. A hundred pounds or so would buy you a diamond necklace, my lady. Wear it in remembrance of me—in remembrance of your forsaken lover, Donald Fitzgerald."

Nora cannot see his face; the light of day has crept slowly out of the earth, and dusky night gathers heavily about them. She cannot see his face, but she catches the furious pain that jars his voice and makes it rough and most unlovely.

"Oh no, no, you are cruel. Arthur"—she shivers over the name—"Arthur could not do that: but—but—there are others—English officers, our guests; and if they should see you it would be your death. Oh, do not stop. Go!"

He does not stir—does not answer. There is a sound of footsteps in the hall, through the open windows the happy laughter of the outside world floats in.

"Will you not go?" She shrinks. The footsteps are coming nearer, nearer yet; down the stairs, and through the hall, toward the door.

"Will you not go before it is too late?" With a sudden impulse she flings herself upon his breast, and winds her arms about him. "Oh, go; do not kill me by staying here. For the sake of our past—for the sake of all that I have been to you, go now and escape while you can."

He draws a long breath, and snatches her to his heart for one brief delicious moment. Then as quickly he puts her away.

"Your kisses are not mine," he says, coldly. "Once they were all to have been mine; but they belong to another now. Give me that rose in your hair."

Mechanically she gives it to him. As he takes it, he bends forward and peers into her eyes.

"Are you happy, Nora?" The thought which prompts the question seem to be far away, groping.

"Happy! Do you not see that you are taking my very life away with you? Nevertheless, go—go!"

A hand lingers on the knob of the door, without—while with a last, long look at her or at the shadow of her, as she stands beside him, Donald flings up the sash window and disappears in the dusk.

With a low exclamation of thanksgiving, Nora hears his footsteps ring on the flag below; she is too weak to stand; she finds her way, somehow, to a chair close by; she sinks into it, and flinging her arms out across the table, drops her face upon them in a blessed state of half-insensibility.

She remains thus while a servant comes in and lights the great chandeliers, and then goes out again. She remains thus while other footsteps come into the room; they come quickly forward and pause beside her chair.

"Nora!" A hand is laid gently on her arm; a man's voice speaks rather hesitatingly in her ear. "Nora—are you ill?"

The young girl raises her head with an irritated gesture. The excitement of the last hour has subsided, leaving all her nerves strung to a high, nervous pitch.

"I wish you would not follow me about in that disagreeable, *prosaic* way, Arthur," she says, crossly. "If you want to speak to me, speak like a man. I am not sick, I am only tired."

A dark red flush stains the young man's fair face.

"I did not mean to offend you," he answers, humbly. "I only thought you looked very pale—unusually pale."

Nora does not answer; her fair gold-tinted head leans languidly back against the cushions of her chair.

"I came to tell you," Arthur says, still hesitatingly, "that we are to have dancing to-night, in the hall. The officers quite insisted on it; and my father at last gave his consent. But I suppose you will not feel like joining us. You look very ill—and disturbed!"

"I certainly do not feel like dancing," she answered, with a shiver. Her quick fancy flies out into the night and follows a figure hiding in the darkness; a figure flying, whither? outlawed, homeless—a price set by fellow-men upon his head. Oh, it was hard! the bitter tears welled up. "Why do they dance?" she asks, irritably. "Could they not be quiet *one* night. Could they not leave me even one last evening in peace?"

The blue eyes before her flash quick and cold as steel. But whatever emotion, murderous and black, is stirred within him, he pushes it resolutely back and answers, still humbly—

"If you wish it, they shall not dance. I will tell them so at once; I will not have you annoyed or disturbed."

Nora's blue eyes fly wide open and fix themselves upon his face.

"It would not answer! better let them dance. But you are kind—very kind. Is it possible"—a little mocking blush tinges her cheek—"is it possible then that you love me a little, a very little, after all?"

The young man kneels beside her and winds his arms fondly about her unwilling form.

"My God, Nora, why do you speak like that? Has not my whole life been given up to a vain idolatry of you; an idolatry that for years, long years, was not rewarded with even one smile. Why do you doubt me now?"

"I have sometimes wondered," she goes on coldly, "how you would take it if—if I were not to marry you after all. I have wondered if you would feel it very much; if you would care."

His arms fall from about her; he starts to his feet.

"People tell so many strange things," she goes on; "untruths, flatteries, lies. I hate a lie. Do you know, Arthur, that when I find a person telling me a lie I have a wish to murder them?"

He does not answer for a moment, while his heart beats with a cold, faint dread. She too is silent, looking with compressed lips into the black night—the night through which her lost lover flies, a lonely, desolate man for evermore.

"Come," says Arthur, gently, "let me take you to your room. You are not well; you are talking wildly and foolishly. You need rest."

She does not resist while he leads her away, up the corridor, along the hall, away from the sound of happy music and dancing feet to her own room. At the door she stops, looking wistfully in Arthur's face.

"I have been very rude to you. Forgive me, and add to your kindness by promising that I shall not be disturbed to-night."

"I swear it," he answers, promptly. "No one shall come near you to-night. I will lie across your threshold else, and keep all intruders away."

Is there an ominous significance to his words? If there is she does not heed them, but smiles and shuts the door. She waits a moment to hear his footsteps die away, then falls beside her bed in an attitude of prayer. Her prayers must have been tender, for when she lifts her face, a smile and tear together kiss the dimples in her cheek.

She flings off her heavy day-dress and puts on a soft, white cashmere wrapper. Then, with bare little feet on the cold stone, she steals out into the balcony, and kneeling, crosses her arms upon the rail. How fair the night is; how fair the emerald land. Every inch of this green earth, betwixt Shannon and the sea is sacred with memories of her lover. Where is he now? She stretches her arms out into the darkness.

"Oh, my love! my love! you have taken my heart with you, but have left me behind."

Something stirs below in the dark; a familiar voice breathes her name.

"Nora, my darling, are you there?"

The young girl glances round her with a frightened air, then bends forward, looking over with her hand upon her heart.

"Donald! Oh, why are you so reckless? Do not stop here; it is death, sure death? I beseech you to go."

His only answer is to spring into the body of the tree that shades the balcony. Holding by one hand firmly to a branch he swings lightly toward her. His dark face touches hers in the cool, sweet dusk.

"I have come for you, my darling," he says, as he puts his disengaged arm about her waist. "Henceforth you will share my wanderings—my home shall be your home now. Come, come, Nora!"

She draws back with a little passionate cry of love and denial mingled.

"Come," Donald repeats, his voice full of quiet power. "You belong to me. Your pure life shall never be poisoned by mating with that bad man who claims you—that liar and traitor in one. Come!"

A sudden light swings out above their heads. A moment it envelopes them, it seems to envelope the whole world in its cruel gleam. Then a pistol-shot rings out upon the air. "Die, rebel," says a voice distinct and clear.

Wavering within hand upon his breast, Donald looks up. The fierce light falls full upon the glittering beauty of his dark face as his eyes meet the fierce eyes staring down from above.

"I said truly, he murmurs, "a traitor, and a murderer now."

Then his hold relaxes, his body sways, and with a dull thud falls heavily to the ground.

Nora on her knees remains like one struck, helpless, to death. She too has seen the cruel eye above; she knows what hand has fired the murderous shot. For a moment she covers, shuddering on the cold stones, then with a sudden impulse, before Arthur can guess or hinder her, she has sprung over the balcony to the ground below. Shivering and bruised she creeps to Donald's side. She feels his heart, it is still—terribly still. She lays her face to his, it is cold—terbly cold. He will give her back kiss for kiss with those stiffened lips in this world ever again.

"Oh, my love! Oh, my love! He murdered you!" she cries, and then her head falls forward heavily on his breast.

"He was an outlaw, and he died an outlaw's death!" says Arthur's stern voice in her ear. "Come away, Nora, this is no place for you.

She submits passively, as he lifts her up and leads her away through the wondering, horror-stricken crowd that has gathered round them. In the great hall, however, she stops under the lights. Her little feet make bloody marks on the floor; her white dress is dark stained.

"Donald's blood" she says, smiling softly as she touches it with her cold fingers, and then places them to her lips.

Shuddering, they draw her away, but on the first stair she slips and kneels—

"Step by step, o my knees, I come to you, oh, my love!" she cries, lifting her arms heavenward.

Shuddering, they drag her on. Still on the next step she slips on her knees; and the next. Will she never get up those horrible stairs? At the door of her room Arthur leaves her motioning the others back. He is carrying things with a high hand, but then to-morrow she is to be his wife.

"I promised that you should not be disturbed," he says, with a grave bow, "and I have kept my promise. I will send your maid to you now."

Nora shrinks ever so slightly from the cruel look in his eyes as she silently shuts the door in his face. When the maid comes and demands admission, there is no answer. The door is fast.

Little by little the sounds of music and careless footsteps die away. Somehow, they can not dance with that dark, stiffened figure lying in the room without. Even though it be an outlaw and a "felon"—they love to use the word—it calls unanswerably for silence.

So one by one the revellers drop away; stillness falls upon the great house; even the tired watchers sleep. When morning breaks the dead man is still lying there, with another, a woman's dead figure, kneeling beside him. Nora's arms are about him, her cheek lies against his, as it fell away when she kissed him, and a curl of the golden hair flickers across his lips. Through all the silent watches of the night has the dead man's dust once thrilled with that fond love which prompted him, one summer day, to claim a tress of hair which the wind blew back for him to kiss? Who knows?

So Donald claims Nora in death, and the living lover stands baffled, looking down upon the united pair. In life he could divide them, but death stepped in and crossed his game.

"I wonder if they are happy?" he says, with a harsh laugh. Then he mutters to himself, as he turns away—

"Who is he that knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he knows."

One knows, but the other does not! Perhaps never will—neither in time nor in eternity.

MAGGY'S BOUQUET.

BY LETTICE THORPE.

It was a church festival. A gay party of ladies and gentlemen had assembled for the purpose of procuring money to purchase an organ, and other things considered equally necessary, and after all the customary devices for increasing their funds had been exhausted, an elegant bouquet was offered for sale, to be bestowed upon the prettiest young lady present, as decided by the gentlemen's votes. The two acknowledged beauties of Mendota tossed their heads complacently, and smiled a delighted approval of the proceedings, each one feeling quite confident that she would be the successful candidate. A young girl stood watching them for several moments, with evident appreciation and amusement, and then a mischievous smile played about her lips and increased the merry lustre of her eyes. She was by no means beautiful, but had a lively, pleasant face, and abundant health, that flushed her cheeks and lips with a color that made all other faces look pale and faded beside hers. Every one liked Maggy Wilson, excepting indeed those whose jealousy was aroused by her greater popularity. After watching the young ladies before alluded to, she ran up to an elderly lady present, saying,

"Mrs. Nealy, may I take that bouquet round, and get votes?"

"Votes for yourself, Maggy?" inquired the latter, in return.

"Of course, ma'm, that is what I mean to do."

"Well, take it," said the lady, laughing, "and get all you can."

Maggy seized the offered prize, and going back to the two girls, who were now watching her with wondering eyes, she said, in a teasing way:

"Now, girls, you both think that you are going to get this bouquet, but you will not, because I mean to have it myself."

"Indeed!" exclaimed one of them, contemptuously. "I didn't know that you set yourself up for a beauty."

"Didn't you, though? Then it is quite time that you should be informed of the fact."

"It must be of the Dolly Varden sort," sneered the other.

"Now, girls," continued Maggy, laughing, "don't be ill-natured. You have worn the honors so long, you ought to be willing to step aside just once, and let poor little me have some chance. But I mean to have these flowers, any way. I shall ask every one of the gentlemen to vote for me."

"Well, if I could not get them without begging, I would rather not have them. But I am not as bold as you are."

"No, I suppose not; but you must say good-bye to the bouquet, for I am going to get my votes."

"You will not dare to do it, Maggy Wilson."

"Won't I, though? Just watch, and see;" and dancing toward a good-natured looking man standing near, she said:

"Mr. Rigby, won't you vote for me?"

"Certainly I will," he cried, laughing pleasantly, "with all my heart. I'll vote ten times for a bonny lass like you."

So, with a triumphant glance at the disgusted beauties, she passed on to some one else. The gentlemen all entered heartily into the spirit of the thing, and Maggy ran gayly here and there with cheeks and eyes growing brighter every moment.

"Miss Wilson," whispered some one in her ear, "there is a stranger over there; go and get his vote."

"Oh, I am afraid!" she replied; "he looks so serious and dignified."

"Afraid! You afraid! I am sure you need not be."

"I don't care," she said, at last, "I'll do it," and summoning up all her courage, she approached the gentleman referred to, a fine looking man of perhaps thirty years, and with glowing cheeks and half-deprecating smile, she announced her errand. "Certainly," he replied, "I shall be most happy, and may I give as many votes as I choose?"

"Yes, sir," she said, "but I only asked for one."

"Then you shall have that one, with nineteen added to it," he returned, with an admiring glance at the bright face before him.

"Oh, thank you, I shall be sure of the bouquet now."

"And are you so very fond of flowers?"

"Oh, yes, I love them dearly, but then, you know, I am doing this for the sake of the fun, to teaze the girls that think I have no business to advance any claims to beauty."

"Then I rather think that the result of the contest will prove to them that the gentlemen do not hold the same opinion," he answered quite seriously.

Of course Maggy won the prize and also the attention of all the Mendota beaux, who quite neglected the other young ladies, so eager were they to watch the motions of the mischievous girl, who they all declared deserved the bouquet for her merry, winning ways, if not for regular beauty. A few days afterward she received another gift of beautiful flowers, that she suspected at once came from the handsome stranger; a gift that was repeated every few days, although she did not see the suspected donor anywhere, or hear anything more about him. But, in the meantime, she had become the belle of Mendota most decidedly, much to the displeasure and chagrin of the two more showy beauties, who could not understand how "that plain Maggy Wilson had managed to humbug the gentlemen so ridiculously." They knew all about the strange gentleman, and also of his sending the flowers to their audacious rival, although confined to his room by sickness, which had been the case ever since the festival. They had admired his fine appearance that evening, and had quite resented his utter indifference to their charms, so now they put their naughty heads together and vowed that they would be revenged upon Maggy Wilson, who had taken such malicious pleasure in teazing them, and they would now have some little fun at her expense. "She is not going to have it all her own way," exclaimed Ada Merton, the brightest of the two.

"But what are you going to do?" inquired the other.

"I will tell you. We will write some awfully sentimental verses about love and flowers. I can imitate her writing, and he will think, of course, that they come from her."

"But I can't write poetry to save my life."

"No one ever supposed you could, but I can make some silly rhymes, the sillier the better, you know," and so she set to work and concocted some doggrel verses, half sentimental and wholly ridiculous, which she sent at once to the stranger. He was sitting in his room, gazing abstractedly out of the window, when the note was handed to him. He read its contents with a curling lip, and throwing it contemptuously aside, exclaimed: "She never wrote that, I know, she has too bright, too intelligent a face to be the writer of such contemptible nonsense. Some mischievous person has done this to annoy her, and I will find out who it is. I shall be well enough to go out to-morrow evening, and I will accept Mrs. Loomis's invitation to her party, where all the ladies of Mendota will probably be seen," and the next evening found him at the lady's house, quite early, where he intently studied the faces of all, as they entered the brilliantly-lighted rooms. He was introduced at once to Maggy, who thanked him in a pretty, blushing way, for the lovely flowers she had received. "But how did you know I sent them?" he inquired.

"Because," she replied, laughingly; "our young gentlemen are not in the habit of sending us bouquets."

"It is time they began," but at this moment he noticed Ada Merton watching Maggy with no amiable expression of countenance. "Ah, ha, young lady," he said to himself, "I think I know now who wrote those verses," and turning to Maggy, he requested an introduction to the fair mischief-maker, as he inwardly called her. The former did as requested, and then left him to enjoy the society of Miss Ada, who tossed her fair head triumphantly as Maggy walked away. He talked in quite a complimentary strain for some time, until she began to think her beauty had at last made an impression; then quite abruptly, he inquired.

"Miss Merton, do you ever write poetry?"

For a moment she looked the picture of guilt, then quickly recovering herself, she replied, carelessly—

"Oh, no, Mr. Stanhope, Maggy Wilson is our only poetess."

He said no more on the subject, but soon turned away and joined Maggy, by whose side he remained most of the evening, quite to her satisfaction, it appeared. Her bright face and merry ways seemed very fascinating to him, and he soon became almost her constant escort and companion. Ada Merton saw that her little plot had been a failure, and suspecting that Mr. Stanhope had found her out, she took the opportunity to go away and visit a friend. A month passed by, and the gentleman now talked of returning to his own home. Poor Maggy had yielded up her heart unresistingly, and the thought of his departure saddened and depressed her. "Miss Wilson," he said one night, when they were walking together, "do you know what the gossips are saying about us?"

She hesitated a moment, and then said frankly, "yes, I do."

"Well, what had we better do about it?" he inquired, bending over her, and trying to look into her averted and blushing face; "tell me, Maggy, shall we take them at their word? If I only had your talent at pleading." But Maggy seemed convinced of his eloquence, for although he soon afterward went away, it was not long before he returned again, and carried her off with him, and Maggy never regretted the bold step she once took to win a bouquet.

How Mr. James Cotton Came to Take the Post.

BY DAISY BURNS.

Mr. James Cotton is an old man, and a rather peculiar one in some respects; but he has a delightful little daughter, Jennie by name, who is very intellectual, and who loves to cultivate her intellect. Mr. Cotton is very proud of Jennie, he loves her and gives her books, music, flowers, and everything she wants; but one thing he positively refused her. Jennie had her heart set upon taking THE POST next year; but Mr. Cotton refused her any funds for subscribing for any literary paper. "For," says he, "they're all humbugs." A great mistake—yet we cannot much blame the old man when we consider how he was "taken in," (to use a slang phrase), by one paper professing to be a literary paper.

You see some time ago somebody came around with a lot of pictures, neatly framed, making up a club for a paper published away off—I shall not say where. Every subscriber was to receive an elegantly-framed picture. Well, everybody that could raise two mighty dollars, and there was quite a number, subscribed at once.

Mr. Cotton was the first name; he fell in love at once with one of the sample pictures and frame, and subscribed for Jennie without mentioning the fact to her. In a short time Jennie received a paper. After reading two or three articles, she exclaimed, "Who in the world had the impudence to send me this paper?"

"Ahem—don't you like it?" asked her father.

"No, it's not one bit of account," throwing it in the fire.

"Oh, well," thought the old man, "she won't say that when the picture comes."

But alas! no picture ever came. The paper continued to come regularly every week. Jennie burned hers as soon as they were handed her. But I—be it known, I was "taken in" as well as Mr. Cotton—found mine very useful; for, when the shavings gave out, I would then unwrap the paper on which was written "Daisy Burns," crowd it in the grate, and—well, it just went off like magic. Since then, Mr. Cotton has had no use for literary papers.

Jennie read my POST, and said she just must take it, and asked me how she could convince her father it was not, as the other had been, a humbug. I gave her a little advice, and every week Jennie made a point of reading something pleasing from its pages to her father. One night she read one of Zig's best articles.

"Ah," said the old man, "good sense in that, good sense. That man's got the right stuff in him."

Jennie told him 'twas written by a lady, but she couldn't convince him. He knew women never wrote as sensibly as that. Jennie was particular to let him know it was in THE POST. The next paper she read Max Adeler's humor. The old man laughed heartily and enjoyed the many scraps of wit, and concluded MAX must be a pretty sharp fellow. Then Mr. Cotton saw Jennie with a new dress on. He admired the style in which it was made, and inquired who made it.

"I did," she said, "I made it in accordance with Olive King's directions."

"Who is she?"

"Oh, the lady who writes about fashions in THE POST."

"Umph! that POST seems to be a great paper."

"Yes, I like it so much."

Then Jennie heaved a sigh and went out. A week or two afterward Mr. Cotton stepped into the dining-room.

"Why," he said, looking at a set of new chairs, "where did these come from?"

"I made them," said Jennie.

"You?"

"Yes, sir; Daisy Eyebright, who writes for THE POST, said what could be done with old chairs, and I tried it with what success you can see. You know those old bottomless chairs that have stood in the smoke-house for so long. Well, I bought some coarse twine, crocheted the seats, fastened them in and varnished them. Now, don't they look nice?"

"They are fine, Jennie." sitting down in one. "Stout, too." Then he drew forth his pocket-book. "Jennie," he said, "we must have THE POST if it teaches such economy as this, tells you how to make your dresses, and makes an old man like I am laugh like a school boy. Then that sensible man Zig's letters. Yes, Jennie, here is $3, we'll take THE POST."

Jennie took her $3, laid it carefully away, and I am satisfied at the end of next year Mr. Cotton will cease to think *all* literary papers are humbugs.

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

☞ An Indiana clergyman is said to have recently delivered his sermon in rhyme.

☞ A successful farmer, in Kentucky, has been blind since he was eight years old.

☞ A Pennsylvania grandmother boasts eight twin grandchildren.

☞ A petrified Indian was recently dug up in Georgia, with a deep cleft in his skull, and a stone hatchet beside him.

☞ The following question is suggested for a debating society: "Which was first—the egg which produced the first chicken, or the chicken which produced the first egg?"

☞ A convicted murderer, under sentence of death in Georgia, has sold his body to a medical gentleman for $10, which he has expended in toilet articles.

☞ In Harrisburg, recently, a young man was arrested for spitting tobacco juice on the floor of a church, in defiance of the rules posted on the walls.

☞ Mills and manufacturing establishments which shut down in a hurry at the outset of the panic are now starting up again, and business is everywhere improving.

☞ A recent advertisement states that competent agents are wanted for the sale of a new medicine, "which will be very profitable to the undertaker."

☞ A very absent-minded individual being upset from a boat in the river, sank twice before he could remember that he could swim. He fortunately remembered it just before he sank the third and last time. A great invention is memory.

☞ A nativity notice in a California paper says: "Born—A son, a regular fifteen pounder, to the wife of Elder Manheim, the eloquent expounder."

☞ A man died of starvation in the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland, recently, and on removing his clothing, $250 were found concealed about his person.

☞ An obituary notice in a late paper contained the touching intelligence that the deceased "accumulated a little money and ten children."

☞ A Pittsburgh man recently fell fifty feet through a hatchway, with fatal results to several packing-boxes beneath, but no material injury to himself.

☞ A young man was struck by lightning near Trenton, N. J., recently, and when the neighbors began to flock to the spot to view the body, they found a man standing beside it trying to sell lightning rods.

☞ A Maine butcher, while dressing a cow, found in the lower part of the brisket of the animal a large shawl pin nearly three inches in length.

☞ A Peoria gentleman, who rather suspected some one was peaking through the keyhole of his office door, investigated with a syringe full of pepper sauce, and went home to find his wife had been cutting wood, and a chip had hit her in the eye!

☞ The Calcutta Englishman, of October 24th, reports as follows: "An American passenger, Mr. Hamlin, attempted to shoot the captain of the steamship Meinam while coming up the river on the last voyage from Galle. He was supposed to be suffering from delirium tremens."

☞ A young lady teacher in one of the Lockport (N. Y.) public schools was assaulted by one of her large boy scholars recently, and so badly handled that she was taken home in an unconscious state. The Union says if the case proves as aggravated as reported, "the boy should be suspended by the neck."

☞ Petty smuggling from Canada is brisk. A letter from Ogdensburg says that several Watertown ladies were searched at the custom-house recently on coming from Prescott, and had their goods taken away from them. Thirty-three women were searched, and all but four were trying to smuggle something over.

☞ Things move at a rapid pace in Dubuque. A young man in that city, it is said, recently met a strange girl on a street car. He was struck with her appearance, and his first act of loving devotion was to pay her fare. This noble proof of disinterested affection so touched the susceptible heart of the damsel, that three hours afterward these new acquaintances were husband and wife.

☞ A gawkey saw, for the first time, a school-girl going through some of her gymnastic exercises for the amusement of the little ones at home. After gazing at her with looks of interest and commiseration for awhile, he asked a boy near by, "If that gal had fits?" "No," replied the lad, contemptuously; "that's gymnastics." "Oh, 'tis, hey?" said the verdant; "*how long has she had 'em?*"

☞ A small lady, aged five, whose pa had not bought her the usual new clothes for Christmas, was heard to privately remark that she guessed "pa was holding on for a rise in the rag market."

☞ A Connecticut man recently shot his wife, and then pretended he was aiming at a stray cat. The coroner's jury did not think the story had the requisite density, and committed him for trial.

☞ Two Americans did honor to the land of their birth by chewing up the programmes in a Berlin theatre and throwing them at the actors, for which playful eccentricity they were ejected from the house.

☞ A Titusville paper says a man called at one of our shoe stores yesterday and vainly essayed to get on either number 11, 12, or 13 shoes. The storekeeper then suggested that he should put on a thinner pair of stockings and try on the box.

[From the "Express," Dansville, N. Y.]

SATURDAY EVENING POST.—This old-established literary weekly, having published serial after serial of love and adventure, and page after page of the shorter stories and sketches, long ago ceased to improve, from the fact that long ago it reached a position attained by no other literary journal, and one over which an improvement could hardly be made. The journal is first-class, and the advantages it offers to subscribers are rare, although we think that its weekly visits and the choice reading thereby furnished exceed all other attractions.

Something Like an Apology.

The editor of a western paper once gave a notice of a ball, and happened incidentally to mention that the dancing of Major Heeler's better half was like "the cavorting of a fly-bitten cow in a field of cucumbers." The fact that the editor had not been invited to the ball may somewhat detract from the value of the simile, while at the same time it accounts for his establishing the figure. The major, accompanied by his better half and a six-shooter, called on the editor to complain of the poetical nature of the image. On learning that the lady was the one he had described, the editor besought her to raise her veil. She did so, adding, "Now, sir I expect you to apologize." "Apologize! I should rather think I would," was the answer, as he seized his hat and rapidly left the room. The astounded major rushed to the window, "Stop, you sir, you haven't apologized!" "All right, I'm going to do it in a minute!" "What do you mean?" shouted the major, accentuating the note of interrogation with a pistol bullet. The answer was wafted back from round the next corner—"Can't you see I'm looking for that cow!"

☞ A courageous young lady, named Cunningham, in Chicago, recently encountered a burglar who had entered the house in which she lived, and caused him to take to flight. The young lady and her mother were asleep in their chamber, when they were disturbed by the noise of somebody moving about the passage. Hastily throwing on some clothing, they proceeded to investigate the cause of the unusual sounds. While Mrs. Cunningham went up stairs, her daughter proceeded to the first floor, where she suddenly encountered a rough-looking man in the sitting-room, who assumed to be a boarder; he asked her quietly, how soon breakfast would be ready. The courageous girl replied by ordering him to leave the house immediately. The fellow then threw off his mask, and, with an oath, remarked he would stay there until he got ready to leave. Miss Cunningham thereupon took him by the arm, and attempted to force him out of the room. The fellow resisted, and a scuffle ensued, which ended by the burglar breaking away from the clutches of his fair antagonist, and making a hasty exit out the front door.

A Manual of Health.—The edition for 1874 of the sterling medical annual known as HOSTETTER'S ALMANAC is now ready and may be obtained, free of cost, of druggists and general country dealers in all parts of the United States and British America, and indeed in every civilized portion of the Western Hemisphere. This Almanac has been issued regularly at the commencement of every year for about one-fifth of a century. It combines with the soundest practical advice for the preservation and restoration of health, a large amount of interesting and amusing light reading, and the calendar, astronomical calculations, chronological items, &c., are prepared with great care, and will be found entirely accurate. The issue of Hostetter's Almanac for 1874 will probably be the largest edition of a medical work ever published in any country. The proprietors, Messrs. Hostetter & Smith, Pittsburgh, Pa., on receipt of a two-cent stamp, will forward a copy, by mail, to any person who cannot procure one in his neighborhood.

Symptoms of Catarrh.—Obstruction of nasal passages, discharge falling into throat, sometime profuse, watery, acrid, or thick and tenacious, mucous, purulent, bloody, putrid, offensive, etc. In others, a dryness, weak or inflamed eyes, ringing in ears, deafness, ulcerations, scabs from ulcers, voice altered, nasal twang, offensive breath, impaired smell and taste, etc. Few only of the above symptoms likely to be present in any case at one time.

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LONGFELLOW AMONG THE FLOWERS.

In the *New York Weekly Tribune*, of December 6, a correspondent questions the poet's accuracy when he introduces a lady who is occupied in an out-door garden somewhere in New England, picking "Sweet Alyssum and Columbine." He asks: "Is there any process of out-door floriculture by which these two flowers can be made to bloom in the same month?" And the editor answers:

"Sweet Alyssum and Columbine can be made to bloom at the same season by forcing the former; but to speak of their blooming naturally at one time is conspicuous inexactness."

This probably is a mistake, as Longfellow, like other great poets, is a close observer of nature. Will some of our florist friends in New England tell us how the Sweet Alyssum behaves in that region? It is very hardy and a constant bloomer in this latitude, coming up early in spring and hastening to bloom at a couple of inches' height above the ground. Then the seed drops, springs up speedily and flowers with no more care than the green grass. Thus a bed of Sweet Alyssum covers the ground with masses of white, fragrant blossoms the whole season through, and a lady may gather them in the same posy with the Columbine, which comes in early summer, or any other flower, for this brave little plant is among the very last to give up the field to the frost. S. P.

CITY FASHIONS.

Notwithstanding the financial pressure, shopping goes on in the liveliest manner. As a consequence of it, indeed, for the crash of great houses has thrown goods into the market at such prices that ladies who have money, hasten to secure what they want. Wherever the signs of distress and ruin are thickest, buyers throng in after great bargains, and throng out with bundles, successful and elated at getting things below cost. Sprague's prints at nine cents a yard, and beautiful summer silks at fifty, sixty and seventy-five cents, who could not afford new dresses, now?

But nobody wants summer silks at this time, it may be said. Whoever is suffering from the heavy, overtrimmed dresses of the last few years—and they are nine out of ten among women, do want them—would do well to choose them in preference to the rich heavy materials considered suitable to the season. Several changes of fashion lighten the load that women at present, doom themselves to bear; the popular redingote is severely simple, bordered with a band merely; and instead of trimmings of the dress material, often cruelly heavy, lace and fringe, and bands or ruffles of silk are used.

Those who will trail their walking-dresses, now use a much better protection than plaited wigging, which soon becomes unclean and ragged. An inner facing of dark oil-cloth or morocco, two yards in length, is placed upon the back breadths and bound with braid. Any defilement can be removed with a wet cloth.

Oxydized silver ornaments are now mixed with gold for lockets, crosses, etc. Something was wanted to make that ugly material passable. Old pewter rubbish it always looked like to me, the favor shown it only to be accounted for by the glamour of fashion. It is surprising how little taste there is in designs for jewelry. One would think the manufacturers of such costly material might afford a few ideas—a little attention to elegance, but any such success is rare. I am always astonished, in looking over jewelry, that men can work among such beautiful things to so little purpose. The show-cases ought to be full of artistic triumphs—gold and silver and precious stones poetically set.

Speaking of artistic designs reminds me of the Rubens hat, so charming through the summer in straw, and now made in felt. When it came out it was the prettiest hat of the season, but trial has proved that it is not therefore becoming for everybody. It ought to be a young, picturesque face beneath that picturesque hat. Middle aged ladies beware! This piquant style belongs to sweet sixteen, and when we see it shading a plain, elderly face, it looks as if the wearer was masquerading. A Rubens in white felt, with blue velvet and plumes, set upon tresses of paly gold, would make a picture; and perhaps it would be still more striking in black felt, over brown eyes and hair and glowing cheeks. There are many faces that look best in a tall hat with rim caught up at the sides.

The Elizabethan ruff of the dress material lined with silk, not a new fashion, but only this winter fully adopted in Philadelphia, generally has a most becoming and tasteful effect. Of course a figure in the least of the dumpy order—one that needs rolling out as somebody phrased it, should abstain altogether from ruffs of the dress material, and from ruffs of any magnitude in the sheerest material; but the tall and spare, as Queen Elizabeth was herself, may rejoice in the revival of a fashion that gives dignity to their height, and hides so kindly the long neck, while it shows off the full effect of every graceful movement. It is just the thing for a slender fragile figure, as most American girls and women are, even though *petite*. The swan-like neck, with all its exquisite curves of grace, rises from out the dainty silk and lace environment with an elegance truly *ravissante*. (That is what a rapturous French modiste would call it;—we don't go into ecstacies over dress in sober English.) The costume that shows off this style most effectively is a rich black silk walking-dress, the ruff lined with soft pink or rose silk, with an inner ruff of tulle enhancing the fairness of the neck. Ladies who study dress at all are well aware of the becomingness of fine transparent white material next the skin. A complexion very far from perfect may appear so when its good points are heightened and its defects softened by a judicious use of lace, or the silk net truly called "illusion." An evening-dress looks well in this style, the voluminous sweeping train according well with the statelimess of the Elizabethan ruff. S. P.

LETTERS FROM ZIG.

POGGINS AND MUGGINS.

It occurs to me that I have told THE POST about everybody whom I ever knew in my life, except just two people. If I remember rightly, I think I never mentioned to you about Poggins and Muggins. I have written up for the amusement of your readers, my friends, my enemies, and my relations. Nay; I have even heartlessly served up my great-grandmother for your especial entertainment.

But I am sure I never told you of Poggins and Muggins.

Poggins is a bachelor; Muggins isn't. They are both unsuccessful men, as the world goes. They both say it is their luck. I'm satisfied it isn't their luck at all, but something else. Poggins is a man forty years old. In the whole forty years of his life, he has not yet laid up money enough to bury himself with. If he died to-morrow, he would have to be buried at the expense of his relations, and they wouldn't thank him for it, either—thus dying and leaving a cold corpus on their hands to be buried. They haven't respect enough for him to bury his cold corpus ungrudgingly.

Poggins is a healthy man. It isn't because he is sickly that he hasn't money enough to bury himself. Not at all. He is as strong as half an ox, and he never was sick more than three days at a time in his life. He isn't an idiot, no more is he crazy. Poggins had a good mind, to start on, good common sense, and as much education as his excellent father, backed by all the school-teachers of his youth, could pound into him. The trouble with Poggins is that, like an Australian savage, he lives just in the present moment, and hasn't memory enough to go back more than one day in his existence. They say the Australian savage hasn't memory enough to count more than ten. If Poggins can count more than ten it doesn't do him any good. He lives wholly for the present moment, and won't look out for the future because it's too hard work. That is to say, he dreams of the future, but he won't work for the future. He sits by the fire in the winter and toasts his toes, and tells his relations what he would do if he had fifty thousand dollars. When he gets rich, he says he is going to have a fast horse, a pointer pup, and 1-don't-know-how-many-times revolving shot gun. When he gets rich, he is going to own a very large farm, and have all the work done on it by machinery, and ride his horse all over the farm twice a week, to see that "things goes right." Poggins is such a donkey that he doesn't even mind his grammar. He might have had one of the best of educations, but it was too hard work to get it. He had an excellent trade, which in time would have enabled him to hold up his head with anybody, if he had worked steadily at it. But he didn't. He worked when it was pleasant. It was far too hard work to labor steadily, day after day, cold and hot, thick and thin, as other men did. Poggins took the easy way. He worked in summer, and in winter when it was cold and not pleasant, he lived with his relations; "sponged," we say out here, and spent in tom-foolery all the money he had earned in the summer. He has done just that way for twenty years, spending in the winter what he earned in summer. A squirrel eats in winter what it lays up in summer. But when a squirrel becomes too old to work in summer, then it dies. Human beings don't do that. When they are too old to work, if they haven't laid up enough in the summer of youth to keep them through the winter of old age, they either hang about the necks of their relations for the rest of their lives, or end their days in the poor-house. I don't know which Poggins will do, I'm sure. And I don't care. For all the good he does himself or anybody else in this world, he might as well drown himself. He is a poor, shiftless, shabby, shallow shack.

He might have been a useful, honorable man. He deliberately chose not to be, because to be a useful and honorable man, one has to knuckle down to work and put in his best, not for a day or a week, but for years. To be a useful, honorable man, one has to rise early and give up his ease, to occasionally sacrifice his desires to the desires of other people, and to remember now and then that there is somebody besides himself in the world. Poggins never did it. He never cared a copper for anybody's comfort except his own, and now nobody cares a copper for Poggins.

In spite of uninterrupted and exclusive caring for nobody but himself during forty years, Poggins is not satisfied with himself now. Poggins is an unhappy man. He feels that in this life he has somehow missed it. His idle, waking hours are mostly occupied in an uneasy, restless, brooding dissatisfaction with himself. He sees other men of his own age pass him by and leave him far behind on the road, and he wonders uneasily why it is, all the time that he is more than half-conscious that it is his own fault. Other men who were school-boys along with him have gone steadily on winning for themselves honors, riches, and a noble name—Poggins remains an ungrammatical dead-beat. Poggins "never had no luck," he says.

Poggins is a donkey. It isn't luck, but laziness. He can't see, or won't see that steady work, hard work, and work alone, has made the difference between him and the other men. The other men have worked with a will, whether it was pleasant or not; Poggins has led an "easy" life. We hold our fortunes in our own hands, and can make of ourselves what we like, if we are willing to make the necessary exertion. Poggins wasn't, therefore Poggins is a selfish, shiftless vagabond. I have such a "despise" for Poggins. I wouldn't lend him any money to save his neck, no, not if I were a millionaire.

Nothing that is worth having is easy to get in this world. A dry old farmer whom I knew in my childhood used to impress that fact particularly on my mind. I remember he used to say, with the air of a sage—

"If you don't work like thunder when you are young, you will never amount to a bean-pod when you are old."

Muggins isn't a bit like Poggins. Poggins has frittered away his whole existence because he was too lazy to make anything of himself. Muggins is not lazy. He is willing to work, and has worked in his time as hard as the most successful man. But Muggins never had any luck either, he says. The reason of Muggins's want of success is that he is a genius. The universal experience of humanity is that the tortoise outstrips the hare in the race at last. Muggins studied medicine, and duly graduated a sew-bones, with a "certified check" of ability to kill or cure, as the case might be. But Muggins thought the profession of medicine didn't suit him. He fancied law would be more to his taste, so Muggins up and studied law. He would have made an honorable and jolly judge some day, if he had only persevered at law, but no sooner had he commenced the practice of law, than he took it into his silly skull that he couldn't make himself rich fast enough at law, that, in short, there wasn't anything in this life quite so fine as to be a "business man." Muggins went into trade. Muggins didn't prosper. He had good business ability, tact, shrewdness and *suaviter in modo*. Old Croesus prophesied that he would be worth his hundreds of thousands long before he died. But he isn't. He isn't worth a hundred cents. He had fine brain, plenty of friends, and a good name, but Muggins to-day is a seedy, shabby-genteel loafer. About the time Muggins was starting in trade, just beginning to be established, he took a most extraordinary freak. He must go West with an exploring party, through the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, and all those outlandish places where the grisly bears and things howl sweetly around your midnight pillow. Off posted Muggins, tearing himself away from the weeping Mrs. Muggins and three little Muggs. He left them to live on hope and air while he was gone, for by that time the poor things hadn't anything else to live on. But Muggins expected to make his fortune speculating in Western lands. In point of fact, he had dollars in his eye. He was sure of them this time. Muggins didn't make his fortune West. He came back without a dollar in his pocket, and not clothes enough on his back to keep him warm. Then the fool went to painting portraits for a living, being a genius, you know. He might have succeeded even in that, in course of time, for he could do anything under the sun he turned his hand to. But he wouldn't stick at it. He worked industriously at the daubing business about two months, and flew off at a tangent one day, and went and took a place as teacher. As a last, desperate resort, he tried school-teaching, and after that there was no more hope for him. His life is a failure because he never would persevere at any one occupation long enough to succeed in it. What use has the world for either Poggins or Muggins?

I don't like geniuses, and I don't believe in 'em. The secret of success in life is to be industrious, and work at one thing. Choose the work you like the best, and never let anything draw you away from it or make you lose sight of it. If God has made you bright and brilliant, all the better,—be thankful for it, but remember that no possible brightness or brilliancy will take the place of patient industry.

ZIG.

Biographical Sketches.

CATHARINE De MEDICI.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

Catharine de Medici, Queen and Regent of France, with whose name history has linked subtle schemes and dark crimes, was the daughter of Duke Laurent de Medici and Madeline de la Tour d'Auvergne-Lauraquais.

Her family had long ruled the republican principality of Florence, where she was born in 1519.

For political reasons, Francis I. consented to a marriage between this sole daughter of the powerful Florentine house and his second son, the young Duke of Orleans. This marriage was regarded by the proud nobles of the French court as a mesalliance, for the stigma of "trade" was attached to the Medici. They had laid the foundation of their immense wealth by successful commercial enterprise. Afterward, Mary Stuart, in girlish thoughtlessness, tauntingly reminded Catharine of the mercantile origin of her family. Catharine never forgave that imprudent but witty repartee.

Her marriage with the Duke of Orleans (afterward Henry II.,) took place in 1533. On her arrival in France she was met by Francis I., and his queen, Eleanor of Austria, attended by the most beautiful ladies of the court, among whom was the celebrated Diana of Poitiers, but the young Italian was pre-eminent among the brilliant train. Although only fourteen, she had already learned to exaggerate her natural attractions by the aid of artificial appliances. Her complexion was dazzlingly white, her features exquisitely formed, her figure majestic, and her movements were marked by grace and elegance. Her face apparently was the index of a gentle, lovely, sensitive nature; but there was firm, cutting steel under the outside velvet—sharp claws were hidden from view by the soft, smooth, treacherous fur.

With marvellous tact and foresight, she set to work to gain all hearts, even those of her enemies. By her amiability and agreeable conversation she succeeded in winning the regard of the king, her father-in-law; when by the death of the dauphin, her husband became heir to the throne, and wished to divorce her on account of her childless state, the king interfered and prevented the separation.

Catharine was capable of great sacrifices for the attainment of power. Ambitiously, quietly, perseveringly, she planned and worked. She concealed her talents under an enthusiasm for trifling amusements, until people believed that politically she was not to be feared. She even treated with outward complaisance her husband's powerful favorite, Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, though in secret her proud soul must have revolted against the hypocrisy that caused her to hold friendly intercourse with her rival.

When the king's death raised Henry to the throne, her conduct did not change, and, although she was crowned queen at Saint Denis, the Duchess of Valentinois, who was twenty years older than Catharine, in reality exercised the authority that was hers of right. The king made her regent, however, on departing for an expedition to Germany. She conciliated everybody, and hesitated at nothing when she had an end in view.

Though Catharine de Medici counselled the massacre of St. Bartholomew on pretext of zeal for religion, she was without religious faith. Her intellect was of no mean order, yet she was exceedingly superstitious. She constantly wore as an amulet, the skin of a child whose throat had been cut. The skin was covered with characters of various colors; she believed that it possessed the power of preserving her from all injury. Cosmo Ruggieri, one of the astrologers whom she often consulted, predicted that she would die at Saint Germain; and as the Tuileries was situated near Saint Germain, she had a new palace erected. She always avoided any place that bore the name.

The eminent French writer, Chateaubriand, thus speaks of her:—"Like the Italians of her time, she was superstitious, but incredulous and infidel. She had no real aversion to the Protestants, but sacrificed them for political reasons. In fact, if we trace all her actions, we shall perceive that she looked upon this vast kingdom, of which she was the sovereign, as an enlarged Florence; and considered the riots of her little republic, the quarrels of the Pozzi and the Medici, in the same light with the struggles of the Guises and Chatillons."

Henry II. met his death at a tournament in which he wore the colors of his sixty-years old mistress, the still beautiful Diana of Poitiers—the lance of the Count de Montgomeri slipped and entered the king's brain.

Diana now felt the weight of the queen's pent-up anger. She was compelled to retire from court, although Catharine, thinking that her familiarity with intrigue might render her an useful auxiliary, afterward recalled her. This famous, or rather, infamous beauty, died in 1566.

Catharine's son, Francis II., succeeded. He knew his mother too well, and was too greatly under the influence of his wife, the young Queen of Scots, to trust her. He reigned only one year, and it was rumored that the queen-mother had caused his death.

Charles IX., a boy of ten, began his reign under the regency of Catharine. She made an excellent choice of counsellors—Cardinal de Lorraine, Montluc, Sambianeay, and l'Hopital were among them. In the struggles between the Guises and Montmorencys, the Catholics and Protestants, she invariably attached herself to the stronger party, and always remained secure in power.

At one time she affected to be attached to the Huguenots; but they attacked her mode of government, and asserted that she was unlawfully taking part in the administration; and after the conspiracy of Amboise, she showed her claws.

The King of Navarre raised the standard of insurrection, and was joined by the Huguenots; but Catharine triumphed, as she did later over the Prince de Condé at Saint Denis.

Catharine, resolving in her heart to destroy her turbulent Huguenot subjects, covered her steel with velvet. She invited the most prominent Huguenot leaders to celebrate the marriage of her daughter, Margaret of Valois, to Henry, son of the Queen of Navarre. This queen, Jeanne d'Albret, came to court, and soon after fell sick and died. As on the death of Francis II., there were dark rumors of poison, but no positive proof. The young King Charles was irresolute, and shrank from the dark plan his mother proposed; but he could not shake off her influence, and he finally became excited almost to frenzy.

Balls, ballets, music, decorations—all were prepared for the reception of the Huguenots. A Roman emperor once smothered his guests with flowers. Catharine was about to imitate him. The Huguenot leaders, who should have by this time known better than to trust the treacherous Florentine, came into Paris.

On the night of the 23d of August, 1572, the massacre of the Huguenots was consummated. It was the night of St. Bartholomew. All the gates of Paris were closed. Catharine, fearing that her son would countermand the order, caused the signal to be given before the appointed hour. Catharine's assassins were let loose. The mob—the ancestors perhaps of the men who caused Paris to run with blood about two hundred years later—joined in the horrid work, and every Huguenot they met was slaughtered. The work of blood spread to the provinces. It was estimated that fifteen thousand Huguenots fell on that terrible night, but the researches of a martyrologist, who obtained the names of the victims from the Calvinist ministers, reduced the number to seven hundred and eighty-six persons.

To palliate this dreadful deed, which stained the annals of France with shame as well as blood, Charles IX. informed every European court that he had only saved himself and his kingdom from ruin by cutting off the leading conspirators. Deceived by this information, and as yet unacquainted with the real state of the case, congratulations flowed into the French court, and thanks were offered for his happy escape.

The wretched Charles fell ill after the massacre, and, dying, turned away in horror from his mother, the real instigator of the direful tragedy. Again, men spoke of poison, for it was known that Catharine loved her third son, now Henry III., better than the two who had preceded him.

Catharine de Medici, it is but just to mention, was a generous patron of literature and the arts. She was cruel, crafty, treacherous, brave and politic. She was virtuous or wicked according to circumstances. She died, aged seventy, at Blois, in 1589.

An Effort at Improvement.

The editor of the "*Atlantic Monthly*" says the style of the author of "*Pemberton*" is "without force."

As we are always desirous of improving our style, we have made a study of some of Mr. Howells' writings, and endeavored to imitate, with what felicity we could, the wonderful vigor of his conceptions. As the result of our efforts so far, we present our readers with two short poems, one by Mr. Howells, and the other our own. First we give Mr. Howells', as follows:—

THE POET'S FRIENDS.

"The robin sings in the elms;
The cattle stand beneath,
Sedate and grave, with great brown eyes
And fragrant meadow breath.

"They listen to the flattered bird,
The wise-looking, stupid things;
And they never understand a word
Of all the robin sings."

Now for our own humble effort:—

THE FOOLISH COCK-ROBIN.

[AFTER HOWELLS.]

Cock-robin sat on an apple-tree,
As proud and vain as cock-robin could be:
The cattle gathered beneath his feet,
And he said, "My singing can not be beat;
And all the world is looking at me,
As I sit up here in the apple-tree."

A naughty boy came by with a gun;
Alas for cock-robin, he fell with a groan.
And as he lay gasping, he said with a sigh,
"If I'd only kept quiet, the boy had gone by;"
But the cattle felt happy, and said as they passed,
"That noisy cock-robin is quiet at last." H. P.

OBSERVATIONS.

BY MAX ADELER.

—The advent of cold weather suggests the propriety of offering a few hints to skaters, in the hope of averting some of those accidents which unfortunately occur so frequently on the ice at this season. It is always judicious for the skater to select some spot where the attraction of gravitation is not very strong, so that if he falls he will come down slowly, and have time enough to pick out a soft place. Persons who have one wooden leg had better not attempt to skate until the said leg has acquired a great deal of practice. This can be gained by taking the leg off and exercising it alone for several hours a day. If it obtains greater facility than the good leg, perhaps it would be better to buy another leg of the same kind and use the two, leaving the good leg at home when you venture on the ice. If you have to sit down on the ice, have a fire built under it first, in order to warm it thoroughly. Never skate when the thermometer is at more than 120 in the shade, and if the ice breaks, unbuckle your skates and hunt up a life preserver before you fall in the water, so that you will escape drowning. Do not scream and make a noise while under the water, and avoid whistling on your fingers to attract attention if you are more than three feet beneath the surface. Calm yourself, if possible, by singing some soothing song, and hold on to the bottom quietly until somebody dives and brings you up. Attention to these few suggestions will probably save trouble and prevent loss of life. We are going to do all that we can for our fellow-men.

—Any young physician who is looking for a position, may obtain, upon application, the office of medicine-man of the Tulare tribe of Indians in California. The position is vacant at present. The last incumbent, it appears, had a misunderstanding with his employers. Eight of the Indians ate indiscreetly of baked dog at a banquet, and were subsequently ill of indigestion. The medicine-man pronounced the disease to be small-pox, and he proceeded to cure it by beating a war drum in two-four time in front of the wigwams, and by singing a chant in A minor. In a few days six of the sight died, and the tribe, having some doubts about the correctness of the mode of treatment, led the medicine-man out in the woods and then they reasoned with him and showed him where he was wrong, and explained their views and held him down and inserted a white oak stake between his ribs and erected a bonfire on his bosom and cooked him. It is a fine opening for a competent man, and we venture to suggest that the person who obtains the situation had better try to cure the next case of dyspepsia by beating the drum in three-four time and singing in B flat major. It is sad to think of human life being sacrificed by this frightful ignorance.

—Two of our neighbors are named John Briggs and Jonathan Bigg, and it happens, most unfortunately, that they live next door to each other. The letters and the packages of the two are constantly getting mixed, and Bigg has opened so many of Briggs's letters, while Briggs has peeped into so many of Bigg's, that a bad feeling was long ago excited, and for several months they have not spoken to each other. On Thanksgiving, however, there was an open rupture between the two families. Both Bigg and Briggs ordered turkeys, which were to be sent home on Thanksgiving morning. It so happened that Bigg's grocer sent his turkey to Briggs, and the Briggs's accepted it, supposing that it was a present from one of their friends. When Bigg and his wife came home from church, the servant, in great consternation, told them that the turkey hadn't come, and there was nothing for dinner. Bigg went off in a hurry to the grocer's, and the boy explained where he had left the fowl. Bigg then rushed back and rang Briggs's door-bell furiously. Briggs himself came out, and Bigg fiercely demanded his turkey. High words ensued, and at last Briggs, in a furious rage, slammed the door, darted back to the dining-room, seized the turkey which was on the dinner-table, and opening the window hurled it over the fence. It went clear through Bigg's glass sash, and hit Mrs. Bigg on the head, mixing stuffing with her hair and daubing gravy and drumsticks upon her dress. Bigg, frantic with wrath, hurled the fowl back again and smashed Briggs's window. Then Briggs returned the turkey with fresh violence. Then each went into his own yard and spent the remainder of the day handing that miserable bird across the fence to each other. On towards evening it were away with so much handling, and at last, when nothing but the neck remained, Briggs buried that and went in the house, while Bigg put on his hat and hunted up an alderman for the purpose of prosecuting Briggs for larceny and for smashing his window. Neither of them has had his Thanksgiving dinner yet. Briggs will probably move.

—Any young man who is anxious to indulge in war can have his yearning gratified without going to Cuba. An eminent pugilist, named Hogan, offers to bet three thousand dollars that he can mangle, macerate and utterly bung any other man in the world. We are not personally acquainted with Mr. Hogan, but we believe he would really make a strenuous effort to do what he says he can. Our eagerness for investigation is not so strong that we are overwhelmingly anxious to pay three thousand dollars for the purpose of determining by actual experiment the precise capabilities of Mr. Hogan; but the opportunity is a remarkably fine one, we should think, for any sanguinary young man who is hungry for the horrors of war, and we are perfectly willing that such a person should commune with Mr. Hogan upon the battle-field. As for ourselves, we shall refrain from combat of every kind, and especially shall we not venture to invade the island of Cuba. It was with the utmost difficulty that we were able during our own war to protect ourselves by executing our favorite manœuvre of falling back whenever the enemy approached. And if this was the case upon a continent which is long enough to permit a man to retreat to the North Pole, how horrible would be the situation of such a strategist upon an island where there is no refuge but the sea! We would rather pay Mr. Hogan ten thousand dollars a year to hammer us into jelly once every month, than to place ourselves in such a situation.

—The approach of Christmas reminds us of the trouble they had over at Chubb's on Christmas Eve last year. Chubb determined to play Kriss Kringle for his children, and so after dressing himself to represent the character and loading up with toys, he crept out on the roof and got into the chimney. His idea was to let himself down by the rope which he fastened to the top of the chimney, into the open fireplace in his bed-room, and so to give the little ones a surprise. Unfortunately, however, the rope slipped when he had descended a few feet and he went sousing down into the flue with terrific force. The flue was too narrow to permit him to pass, and he was jammed in so tight that he could not ascend again. Then he began to scream for help, and the unearthly noise frightened two of the children into convulsions. The policeman who came in proposed to blow Chubb out with gunpowder, but he was restrained by Mrs. Chubb, and as all the efforts of the neighbors to effect a release were unavailing, Chubb spent the night up the flue moaning and grumbling in a manner that was simply awful to hear. The next morning a gang of workmen came and took eight or ten square yards of bricks out of the end of the house, and resurrected the unfortunate man. The job cost him eighty dollars, and he didn't enjoy Christmas a cent's worth. This year he will organize some new kind of pastime for his babes. The Kriss Kringle business is definitely abandoned.

—Barker, who lives close by our neighbor Chubb, is a somewhat timid man, and as there have been several burglaries in our street lately, Barker made an agreement with Chubb that when Barker sprang his rattle at night Chubb should come to his assistance with weapons and dogs. A few nights ago, Barker was detained down town at his lodge until a much later hour than usual, and when he reached home he found, to his dismay, that the servant girl, forgetting that he was out, had locked the door. He rang the bell and thumped on the door in a violent manner for awhile, but finding that this did not arouse Mrs. Barker, he went round to the yard and tried to break open one of the shutters. In the meantime Mrs. Barker *had* been awakened, and just as Barker entered the yard she opened the front window, and finding no one at the door she looked out the back window. She was horror-stricken to perceive a man trying to break into the house. She seized the rattle and sprang it out the front window. Barker heard it and guessed the cause, but he thought if he rushed out on the street now he might be shot by a policeman, so, as he had the window nearly open, he concluded to endeavor to try to get safely into the house. But just as he began to climb in Chubb arrived, and seeing Barker's legs hanging from the window he first emptied a load of bird-shot into them, and then set his two dogs on them. In less than a minute Barker had a dog on each leg, and he came to the ground screaming murder. When Chubb recognized him, he called off the dogs and apologized, but as no amount of explanation could recall those shot and those vigorous dog bites, Barker refused to speak to him, but crawled upstairs to bed, where he is yet. He has intimated to his confidential friends, that while Mr. Chubb undoubtedly is a valuable neighbor in some respects, he infuses into his anti-burglar operations entirely too much sincerity and enthusiasm.

JUNE AND DECEMBER.

Two lovers stand by the river side,
Watching its waters' rushing pride:
June's sun shines fair, June's trees are green,
And the river sings 'mid that lovely scene:

"Flowers—they are blooming:
Roses are red.
Vows—they are breathing:
Fond words are said."

The skies are gloomy, the leaves are shed,
December's clouds ride overhead:
Alone a sorrowful maiden stands,
And the river sings as she clasps her hands:

"Flowers—they are faded:
Roses are dead.
Vows—they are broken!
Love—it is fled!" —L'ESPERANCE.

1874. 1874.

OUR OPENING STORIES FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Davy Crockett on the Track;

OR,

The Cave of the Counterfeiters.

BY FRANK CARROLL,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF GLENDALE," "JOHN PASSMORE'S PLOT," ETC.

This captivating story, which has for its hero that far-famed hunter and backwoodsman of Tennessee, Col. Davy Crockett, will be commenced in the Post of Jan. 3, 1874. (No. 23.) It is a first-class romance, and one which we are happy to be able to announce for the opening of the New Year. We shall also begin, a short time afterward, a fascinating novelet of English life entitled

The Ghost of Norman Park.

BY MARY ATHERSTONE BIRD;

to be followed by the thrilling romance of Northern and of Tropical life—

THE SEA OF FIRE;

OR,

ON THE BRINK OF A PRECIPICE.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

Also, by a new story from the pen of Bess Thomsbury, whose late work, "Jessie Dale, *The Conductor's Daughter*," now being published in this paper, has excited much interest by its strange plot and striking incidents. His new serial will be entitled

HARD TIMES;

OR,

THE REAL VICTIMS OF THE PANIC.

A TALE OF THE WINTER OF 1873–74.

It is scarcely necessary to state to those acquainted with The Post, that the best stories of Love, Adventure, and High and Low Life, in this country and in England, etc., to be found in any weekly paper, will appear in our columns during the coming year. Our Letters, Miscellaneous Articles, etc., also will be of the highest character.

CLAUDIA'S TRIUMPH.

BY CLEMENTINE MONTAGU,

AUTHOR OF "THE COST OF CONQUEST," ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

HIDDEN TO THE FEAST.

There was a sound of revelry by night, and bright
The lamps shone on fair women and brave men.
—*Byron.*

Austin Bertram looked enormously up at his friend.

"I do think you are crazy about that affair, Vavasour," he said, peevishly. "Of course, I don't know why you fancy Glosson had any hand in it, and I don't want to. Hunt through the world for him if you will. He was a great scoundrel, I grant, and I wish you joy of him when you find him; but don't torment me by talking of that bygone Westerpark affair—the very remembrance of it makes me ill."

"It had a terrible effect on you at the time, Bertram."

"It had, and I hate to think of it. It was so dreadful to be in a house with a man, his guest, and then to have him brought home dead in that awful way. It has seemed to haunt me ever since whenever I have been at all ill or worried."

"I'll not talk of it any more," Frank replied. "Here's your gruel. I hope I hav'n't burnt it while I've been talking to you."

"Not you. You are the best cook of that sort of thing I ever came across. You don't worry a fellow over it like a woman does."

He drank his gruel, and Frank said no more of Jasper Glosson and the tragedy at Westerpark; but he thought continually about it, and the name of the man Glosson haunted him continually. His mind was on the rack from other causes as well, and he grew pale and thin from sheer anxiety and loss of rest.

He had seen Alma since her return to London once. She was driving in the park with her husband, exquisitely dressed, and in a carriage which was the envy of half the fashionable throng in the "Ladies' Mile;" but her face was pale and wan, and he read in her thin cheeks and quivering lips, and her eyes all heavy with unshed tears, the weight of hopeless misery she had to bear at home.

He was burning with a mad longing to see her, to rescue her in some way from her wretched imprisonment—for he knew her existence was nothing more—to comfort her somehow, and he daily formed a thousand impracticable schemes to help and cheer her.

Austin Bertram, as he grew better, saw what was passing in his mind, and managed to fan the flame in a hundred ways.

"Have courage and patience," he said, one day, when his friend had been speaking to him of Alma.

"Patience! when I see her dying by inches! For she is dying. No one could look upon her face and not see it."

"Yes, patience. If you do anything rash or indiscreet, you will not only not see her, but make my lord harsher to her than ever."

"It's very well for you to preach," Frank replied, ungraciously; "you don't love her as I do."

"No, thank goodness; therefore, I can look at the matter with unprejudiced eyes. I say again, have patience. You shall see her before long."

"But how?"

"Leave it to me."

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you may. I'll find a way, see if I do not, as soon as I am able to get out."

"But if you fail?"

"I don't often fail in anything I make up my mind to do, my dear boy. Lord Nortonshall won't draw the rein so tight after a bit, and all these disagreeable matters will find their own level. Rely on me, and you shall see my lady, never fear."

Claudia was somewhat disappointed at Brown's note. She had hoped, in spite of herself, for some assistance from him, and she saw plainly by its tone that she might expect none. She showed it to Frank, who shook his head.

"He cannot help me, you see," she said, sadly.

"Say he will not."

"I don't think that is it. I think he was willing to assist me if he could. He was very civil and respectful when I spoke to him about it."

"He would not dare be otherwise; but I think 'will not' is the true meaning of this letter. He is too politic to do more than inform you that he had seen what you were so anxious to repossess."

"And I will repossess them, whatever I do, whatever people say, whatever the cost may be to myself!"

"Have you counted the cost well, dear Claudia?" the young man asked, in a tone that made her heart thrill by its tenderness. "It will cost you much sorrow, maybe, now and afterward."

"It will not matter," she replied, quietly. "I must have them, or I shall feel I have murder on my soul. Oh, Frank, every night I lie down in dread, every morning I awake in terror, lest something should happen to this poor lady. She is in London, they say. Have you seen her?"

"Yes," he replied, in a choking voice, "I have seen her."

"Where?"

"In the park."

"With her husband?"

"With her jailor, rather. Yes, she was with him, looking like a corpse. Claudia, when I think of her, I feel as though my heart would burst—and I am powerless to help her—utterly and entirely powerless."

"But I am not, Frank, and I will do it. My heart is breaking too," she added, under her breath, "but no one minds that—no, not one."

Christmas came, with its warmth of good cheer, and its light, and life, and merriment in the houses of the rich, and its bitter, biting poverty and cold in the homes of those who can hear no angels' songs for the cries of want around them; and Lord Nortonshall issued invitations for a dinner, and evening party to follow.

They were in his wife's name, and the guests assembled, but there was no hostess to receive them. His lordship made every apology.

"Lady Nortonshall had been taken very ill only that day; but she sent her love, and hoped her non-appearance might be no bar to their enjoyment," &c., &c.

All this was delivered with due emphasis, and a proper shade of regret; but there were some present who were not blinded by the intelligence, and among them were Austin Bertram and Lord Wedderburn.

"Very pretty, and very well done," the former said to himself, as he listened to their host's sorrow for his wife's non-appearance; "but I don't believe in it for all that. It is the beginning of the end, I fancy, and the world will see no more of my lady till she leaves the house in her coffin. It's a very pretty game to watch, and extremely interesting to lookers-on."

His surmise was in part correct. Alma was not worse than she had been ever since she came to town. She was simply a prisoner by her husband's express orders.

Early in the day he had visited her in her room, and sternly forbidden her to leave her own apartments during the evening.

"Why, Graham, this is the night of the party," she said, in surprise.

"I do not choose that you shall attend it, Lady Nortonshall," he replied, coldly.

"Why not?"

"That is my business, madam," he said, with an evil look. "Perhaps I am anxious about your delicate health; perhaps—"

"Well?"

"Perhaps I do not care to meet my friends with my faithless wife for their hostess; perhaps—"

"Stop!" she said, in a tone that made him pause, it was so full of suppressed rage: "you have said quite enough, Graham Nortonshall. You lie, and you know it!"

"I do not lie."

"You do."

"Tragedy airs will not serve you, Lady Nortonshall. I would rather believe in the evidences of my own eyes, which saw you in another man's arms, his cheek against yours, his kisses on your lips, than in all the fine speeches and theatrical airs in the world. Remember, madam, you are too ill to be seen. Langham, you will remember it too."

"Certainly, my lord," Langham replied, with a smirk: "my lady will admit no one."

"Will the actress be here?"

Lady Nortonshall asked the question in a sudden and sharp tone, which made both her husband and his myrmidon start.

"I am not sure who will be here till I see them," he answered, shortly.

"Will the actress be here?"

She repeated the question in the same hard, bitter tone, and he answered her directly this time with a sneering smile on his cruel face.

"Claudia? I hope so—I believe so. I did not fail to send her a card. The party would be sadly incomplete without her lovely face to add to its brightness."

"Coward!" she hissed, between her set teeth, while her face seemed absolutely transformed with rage and despair. "You can be dastardly as well as cruel. You shall not have your way in this instance!"

"Indeed!"

"No, you shall not."

"Who is to prevent me?"

"I will."

"How?"

"How? In the way that any outraged wife would do. If that abandoned woman sets foot in this house to-night, I will assert my position as its mistress, and have her turned from the door. Your wife will play the hostess in her own house, and keep it clear of such creatures, even though her husband deems them worthy of the honor of his friendship."

"Have you quite finished?" he asked, with a look of fiendish triumph in his eyes.

"Quite."

"You have no more opinions to offer, nor fine speeches to make?"

"No."

"Then listen to me: you will do nothing so absurd. The house is mine, to receive whom I please in, and I am not going to have my evening spoiled, and the pleasure of my guests interrupted by the presence of a woman. You will not come down—you will go to bed."

"I will not."

"You will," he replied, in a cold, hard tone, that made her shrink and shiver with its cruelty. "Langham, see that she does so."

"Yes, my lord."

"And then, my virtuously indignant lady, I shall take the liberty of turning the key before I go to my guests. I should not like any *contretemps* to mar our pleasant evening."

His wife made no answer this time. She only waved her hand with an impatient gesture, as though she would fain be alone.

It was no use to argue with a man of his cowardly, cruel nature, and she sank into the nearest chair in utter helplessness, while Langham stood looking at her with malicious satisfaction in her face.

She was a creature after Lord Nortonshall's own heart, this smart lady's-maid—obsequious and unscrupulous, and ready to do anything for money. He made her the instrument of his cruelty to his unhappy wife, and it was through her agency that all sorts of indignities were heaped upon the unhappy lady. Alma bore them in silence, knowing well that her attendant was a spy, and that every word she uttered would find its way to her husband's ears.

Lord Nortonshall took no further notice of his wife, but left the room, holding a whispered conference with Langham outside the door, an insult of which Alma took no notice.

The day wore on, and as the evening deepened into night the guests arrived—a merry party, politely regretful for the absence of the mistress of the house, but bearing it remarkably well for all that, and eating, and drinking, and making merry, just as though she were there.

She sat in her handsome room, listlessly thinking through all the weary hours, sadly thinking of her wrongs, and of her sorrows, and of the happy days gone forever. Langham busied herself about her with much officious attention and pretended sympathy; but she sharply bade her be quiet, for she did not like hypocrites, and the women left her to herself.

She went early to bed, and then her attendant, considering her safe, went downstairs to have, as she expressed it, "a bit of chat and half an hour's life among human beings."

CHAPTER XLII.

PASSING BY ON THE OTHER SIDE.

When the Earl o' Herrin passes,
Ladies dressed in silks and laces,
Draw aside their brave palisses,
Toss their heads, and screen their faces.
—*Scotch Song.*

Miss Langham went carefully downstairs the back way, by the door in the corridor—the same entrance which Lord Nortonshall had told Claudia had two keys. She locked the door after her when she went out, but left the key sticking in the lock.

"No one is likely to go up that way," she said to herself, "and she is safe enough inside."

But Langham reckoned without her host. Some one did want to go up that way, and when she had had her gossip, and spent as much time as she dared among the other servants, she returned to her charge, to find an intruder at the forbidden door.

A gentleman was there, stooping down and examining both lock and key with the closest scrutiny. She flew to him, and touched him on the shoulder in indignant remonstrance.

"You have made a mistake, sir," she said. "That door leads only to my lady's apartments."

"I know that, my dear," the gentleman replied, familiarly; "I have made no mistake, I assure you."

"Oh, Mr. Bertram, is that you?" she exclaimed. "Whatever are you doing here, sir? My lady—"

"Is very ill—I know. Of course we have had that melancholy circumstance fully explained to us—most fully, I assure you. Do not be alarmed, my dear Miss Langham; I haven't the slightest intention of intruding on her ladyship's privacy, I assure you. I shouldn't be at all welcome, I fancy."

"But what made you come up these stairs at all, Mr. Bertram? Consider, sir, if my lord should come and see *me!*"

"Oh, you think your character would suffer, do you? Never mind, my dear; I'll pay for the mending of it."

"Sir! *me!*"

"Oh, don't look virtuously indignant. Injured innocence doesn't suit your style of beauty at all. Look here, I don't think my presence here will make a greater flaw in your reputation than this will mend."

He slipped a sovereign into her willing hand, and squeezed her fingers at the same time.

"Now, I want you to promise me something," he said.

"Certainly, sir—anything."

"Ah! I thought you'd change your tone. I won't be very exacting. I only want the worth of that bit of gold in your hand."

"As how?" she asked.

"In silence, that is all."

She nodded, with a knowing look upon her sharp face.

"You must never mention to any one that you have seen me here to-night."

"Very good."

"No one knows it but yourself, mind."

"No one shall know it from me."

"I can trust you?"

"You may. I know when to hold my tongue."

"So I have heard. Your master vaunts your qualifications in that respect rather too publicly for good taste."

"I can be silent when it is necessary," she said, looking at the piece of gold in her palm.

"And as long as you are paid—I understand. You shall have no cause to complain of me when I entrust secrets to your keeping. Remember, I shall rely upon you. If I hear a whisper of this, I shall know you have played me false."

"You shall never hear one, sir."

He glided quietly and softly away, and the woman went into her mistress's room.

Alma lay in a sound sleep, and no sign of any one having been there was to be seen. Langham was sorely puzzled.

"What could he want? What was he doing there?" she asked herself, over and over again. "It wasn't to see my lady, for he could have got in without any trouble with the key on the outside, and he hasn't been in, I'll swear. It couldn't have been to play the spy on me, surely? If it was, I hope he's gratified with all he's seen and heard of me. I'll find out, or my name's not Martha Langham."

Mr. Bertram smiled to himself at the curiosity depicted on the face of the lady's maid as she walked away.

"Thinks I want to see my lady, does she?" he muttered. "No, *I* don't, but some one else does; and if I don't help him to his wish somehow, my name's not—Austin Bertram. Bah! What am I doing? I had very nearly said something that ought never to be spoken, lest the very walls should hear. Only two keys to that door, are there? Ha, ha! I could have a thousand if I liked, thanks to you, my little beauty."

What he held in his hand was only a small thing—a cake of wax—but it bore the impression of the wards of the key with fatal accuracy, and by its means did Austin Bertram propose to weave a terrible web of circumstantial evidence round Lady Nortonshall, and bring about, with ill-advised haste, the *denouement* of the drama of real life in which he was playing so base and deceitful a part.

He returned to the drawing-room just in time to hear Claudia's name announced, and he watched the manner of her reception with considerable interest.

Lord Nortonshall greeted her with marked *empressement*, and proceeded to present her to such of his guests as had not previously been introduced to her.

Mr. Bertram thought he had never seen her looking so beautiful. She was attired in a magnificent white lace dress, looped up here and there with deep crimson flowers; a wreath of the same rested on her glossy dark hair, and two magnificent bracelets—his lordship's gifts—glittered on her arms.

He was enraptured as he gazed on her, thinking he had never seen so lovely a picture, and a murmur of admiration ran through the room—from the gentlemen, at least.

The ladies, if they admired, condemned also, and most of them pursed their lips and fluttered their fans in indignant protest at being brought into contact with such company.

Their host noticed it, and a dark frown wrinkled his brow.

Claudia saw it, and her cheek flushed and her lip quivered with wounded pride and anger, but she took no notice of it.

Lord Nortonshall made no comment either by word or look on any one's manner, though he saw his beautiful companion receiving the coldest nods of reception from those to whom he presented her, and he led her straight through the rooms till he came to a group of ladies—mother and daughters—quite at the end, who had been swelling and fuming with outraged modesty and injured innocence ever since they heard the name of the actress announced.

His lordship took no heed of their black looks, though the whole four met him with frowns which would have made a more timid man wish himself at the bottom of the sea. He walked straight up to the quartette with Claudia on his arm, and, presenting her, said, calmly—

"Mrs. Warburton, allow me to present to you Mademoiselle Claudia Wynne, of the Elysium Theatre."

If Mrs. Warburton could have annihilated the audacious peer she would have done it at that moment. To dare to introduce an actress to her!—and such an actress! A woman whom report already credited with being the mistress of the man who was thus parading their mutual shamelessness! It was too much. She gurgled and gasped till she was almost black in the face in her effort to appear calm in this awful crisis.

She did appear calm, and rose from her seat in all the majesty of offended dignity, to bow gravely to her host.

"I thank you, my lord, for our entertainment this evening," she said in a freezing tone, "and will wish you good-night."

"Madam!"

"I repeat, I will wish you good-night. When the note of invitation reached me from Lady Nortonshall, I was not aware that her place as yet had been publicly usurped, nor whom we should have the honor of meeting as mistress of the evening's revels. Your house is no longer a place for me or my daughters."

"Mrs. Warburton, I—"

"Nor for any woman who values her good name. Allow me to pass, if you please, my lord."

She gathered up her voluminous skirts, lest they should touch Claudia's delicate lace in passing, and without taking the slightest notice of her, she and her daughters walked away in all the dignity of outraged virtue.

Lord Nortonshall was completely taken aback by such a demonstration. He was prepared for some degree of coldness on the part of some of his guests, but he relied upon their curiosity to see his lovely visitor overpowering their prudish scruples at meeting an actress, and he had specially pinned his faith on Mrs. Warburton, who had herself risen from a very mean origin, and who, he felt assured, would receive Claudia, and make her feel at home with herself and her numerous brood of daughters.

He reckoned without his host, however. The lady in question had an old grudge against him—viz., his marriage.

She had coveted him, poor as he was, for one of her girls, and his choosing the country heiress, Alma Bouverie, had been a great disappointment and offence to her. She vowed to serve him out on the first opportunity, and was delighted when the occasion presented itself.

She gloried in the look of confusion that overspread his face at her words, and at the commotion their abrupt departure occasioned in the room.

She saw Claudia, with a pained look upon her lovely face, let go her companion's arm, and leave the room swiftly and silently by another door, and she smiled to herself in grim satisfaction.

"I've spoiled his fine madam's pleasure for one evening, at all events, Maria," she said, spitefully, to her eldest and ugliest daughter, as they drove home. "How dare he insult us or any one else like that!"

The story lost nothing by their narration of it, and the next day a hundred versions of the supposed insult were commented upon in fashionable circles with infinite gusto.

Lord Nortonshall was extremely annoyed, though he tried to laugh it off as a "mistake;" but he found that most of his lady guests were inclined to take part with Mrs. Warburton, and very soon leave-taking on all sides began. He had rushed violently to the door, to follow Claudia, as half his visitors saw; but Lord Wedderburn stopped him.

"Don't be a fool, Nortonshall," he whispered. "Don't make things worse."

"Worse!"

"Yes, worse. Don't provoke any more scandal. Claudia will be all right. She has plenty of common sense."

"I only wanted to see that she doesn't go off in a hurry. The sneering idiots! I'll bring her back, and make them pay her the respect due to a lady. I'll—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort."

"I will."

"You will not. Are you mad?"

"I think I am—with rage at these prudish fools. Let go my arm, Wedderburn—I will go!"

"You'll do nothing at all but remain here," the other whispered, quietly. "Nothing you could offer Claudia Wynne would induce her to enter this room again this evening, if she is the woman I take her for."

CHAPTER XLIII.

FOUND.

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first notion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
—*Shakspeare.*

Lord Nortonshall suffered himself to be overruled, and remained in the drawing-room with his few remaining guests while his friend went in search of Claudia Wynne.

She had gone no farther than the little room his lordship called his study, and in which the cabinet stood, and he found her there, sitting very still, and looking into the fire. She was very pale, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks; but she was quite calm, and smiled at the bungling manner in which he expressed his friend's regret for what had passed.

It was bungling—he could not make it otherwise. An insult offered to a woman, under whatever circumstances, can only be clumsily apologized for, and the circumstances attending this one were exceptionally awkward.

"Don't annoy yourself about it," Claudia said, quietly. "I could have expected nothing different. It was my own fault as much as Lord Nortonshall's. What have I to do in respectable society? I should have kept to my own class, and I am rightly punished for stepping out of it."

Her tone was slightly bitter; she could not help it. She was but a woman, and she had had a woman's tenderest feelings wounded.

"Lord Nortonshall wanted to run after you himself," Lord Wedderburn said.

"Indeed! He was very kind; but it was much better he should not do so. There was no need to outrage the feelings of his guests any farther by running after an actress."

"Outrage, dear Miss Wynne! That is hardly the word to use of such people as that old woman and her daughters. Their opinion is not worth much."

"No; but the opinion of others is. Half his lordship's guests are already gone away in disgust. The other half—"

"Are remaining and showing their good sense by doing so; but for that, Nortonshall would have been here. I persuaded him to remain."

"To soothe their offended dignity, and to assure them that I should not come between the wind and their nobility any more. Quite right; such an offence as he has committed against society to-night is not easily atoned for."

Lord Wedderburn made no answer, and Claudia, seeing the pained expression of his face, relaxed from her hard manner.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," she said, quietly. "I have no right to be fretful and captious with you. You are always polite, and what is more, respectful and courteous, to me."

"What man could be otherwise. You are a lady in every sense of the word—the superior a thousand times, of any of the vulgar set yonder. You have a right to be angry."

"Hardly," she said, with a sad smile. "I was hurt and grieved at what passed. I should be less or more than human if it were not so; but it is past now. I will not go without seeing Lord Nortonshall, for I want to speak to him; but he need not fear my intruding in the drawing-room any more. His visitors had better understand that his house has been freed from the pollution of my presence."

"Mademoiselle, you have the forgiveness of an angel," he said, taking her hand, and touching it with his reverentially, as though the actress had been a queen. "What can I do for you to make you comfortable here for another hour or two?"

"Tell Brown to make up the fire, and send me some supper," she said, trying to speak gayly.

Tears of wounded pride stood in her lustrous dark eyes; but she dashed them away bravely before they had time to fall.

"Don't you think that is the most sensible thing to do, my lord," she asked, "considering all the circumstances?"

"Indeed I do, if I could think you were forgetting what has happened enough to enjoy what you propose—a supper and a good fire."

"I am afraid my enjoyment of anything is just a little blunted," she replied; "but a glass of wine would be really acceptable. My dinner to-day was only an apology for one, and I have taken nothing since."

"And you dine early, I know. Why, what can we all have been thinking about? I will order you up some refreshment at once."

"Only a glass of wine, please. I don't think I could eat, though I did say supper."

"Don't be alarmed; I won't overdo it. Nortonshall will be here in a very little while. You must eat something, if it is only a mouthful."

He left her, and in a very short time Brown appeared with a tray and Lord Nortonshall's compliments, begging she would take some refreshments. She was thankful the valet came himself. She could hardly have borne the scrutiny of the other servants, who she felt sure had heard of what had passed in the drawing-room.

She was right. Servants are quick to hear and to speak, and gossip was already in full swing in the servants' hall anent the insult which had been offered to Claudia. Most of them were of opinion, like their superiors, that she had been rightly served—that she had no business to have paraded herself in that house while the world was so busy with her name; but they all agreed in saying that she had borne it well.

She really needed the food and wine which had been brought her, and she took a few mouthfuls, which made her feel more like herself.

In about an hour his lordship joined her, and paused at the door in admiration of the pretty picture which the little room presented. There was a bright fire, the light from which pervaded even over the gas, and flashed into every corner, lighting up the quaint old carved furniture with crimson radiance.

The table, with its array of shining silver and glittering glass, was pushed back, as was the chair on which Claudia had been sitting, and she was half kneeling on a cushion on the hearthrug.

The Italian blood in her veins made her quite a southron in her love for warmth. She loved the sight of a bright, clear fire, and with her hands clasped upon her knee she was letting the sight of this one carry her back, through its fleeting pictures, to the memory of days long past now. The firelight shone upon her lace dress, through which the folds of lustrous satin gleamed, and the richly-embroidered opera-cloak which she wore had slipped from her shoulders, leaving the glittering necklace and bracelets she wore bare, to flash back flame for flame as the fire flickered and changed. The golden cord and tassels of her cloak trailed on the carpet like a living thing, and added another item to a picture an artist's soul would have revelled in.

She raised her head as Lord Nortonshall entered, and greeted him with a somewhat forced smile. He only saw the smile, not the pain which lay behind it, and came toward her with a glowing face.

"What shall I say to you?" he said. "How shall I apologize to you for what has happened?"

"I need no apology, my lord," she said. "Is not my staying here a sufficient proof that I have forgotten it?"

"That you try to—yes."

"That I have, my lord."

"You say so for fear of grieving me, my own noble-hearted Claudia," he replied, warmly. "I don't believe that any woman could either forget or forgive such an insult."

He knelt down on the rug beside her, and would have thrown his arm caressingly around her, but she stopped him.

"No," she said, resolutely; "unless you want me to leave your house, never to come back. A little further off, if you please, my lord."

"You are too hard upon me, Claudia—on my soul you are," he said, taking the chair she indicated by a gesture of her hand.

"Hard, Lord Nortonshall?"

"Yes, deuced hard."

"How?"

"You take all my love, and give me nothing in return."

"Nothing, my lord?"

"Yes, nothing."

"Am I not here?"

"Well, that's nothing—it's a step in the right direction."

"In the wrong one, you mean. Don't talk of my giving you nothing. I have already given you what a woman should never lose while her life lasts—my good name."

"Don't say such things, Claudia. It makes me mad to think there should be any obstacle to my giving you my name—raising you to the sphere which you would grace better than any woman I know."

"My lord!"

"I'm wild with rage when I think of it; but there shall be an end of it—I swear there shall! There shall be no obstacle long. I'll—"

"Stop, Lord Nortonshall!" exclaimed Claudia, rising. "Another word like that, and I leave your house to enter it no more!"

"Well, I won't, if you'll be more like yourself, Claudia. Be kinder to me, there's a dear. Say something pleasant to a fellow, can't you?"

"I don't know," she said, with a smile. "I'm very angry with you."

"What for?"

"Two or three things."

"Of course—exposing you to that old catamaran's tongue."

"No."

"What then?"

"Keeping secrets from me."

"From you! What have I kept from you, Claudia?"

"You professed the other day to show me everything the house contained."

"And did I not?"

"Did you not! Now, look me in the face and tell me whether you ever opened this old cabinet for my inspection. Come, now, where are your keys? I'm sure there are pretty and curious things inside these carved doors that would be worth looking at," said Claudia.

Lord Nortonshall's face was turned away from her; but she could see a flush rise and fade on his cheeks and a look of confusion come into his eyes.

"What spirit of mischief prompted her to make that request?" he thought.

But he gave her back smile for smile, and replied, lightly and gayly—

"There is nothing in there that would interest you, *ma belle*. It is a regular bachelor repository for all sorts of odds and ends. I bought it long before I committed the enormity of matrimony. Consequently, its contents are somewhat mixed."

"And not fit for a lady's eyes? Is that what you mean, my lord? I mean to see the inside of it, nevertheless. Ah, Lord Nortonshall, when did I ask a favor of you before?"

"Never, by Jove!" he replied; "and it shall go hard if I refuse you this one. She may not see them, after all," he added, mentally, as he gave the key into her hand. "Search the magic cupboard for yourself, fair lady," he said, "and I hope you will be interested in its contents."

Claudia turned the key and opened the door. It was a real antique cabinet, full of shelves, and drawers, and secret recesses, into each of which she peered with an interest only known to herself. In one of the recesses hung a key, bright and new.

"What key is this?" she asked, archly. "Some secret room I have not seen yet?"

"No; it is the key of the corridor where my—where my Lady Nortonshall's apartments are."

"Give it to me."

"To you!"

"Yes; I should like to have it."

"What for?"

"Can you not guess?"

"No."

Claudia bent her head, and her next words came tremulously from her lips.

"Can you not believe that when I come here I should like to be unobserved—to come without all the paraphernalia of carriages, and servants, and publicity. This key, if you will give it me, will give me the power."

"If I could think that was your true reason I would give you a thousand keys, and with each key a kiss, so you would come."

"I can dispense with the latter, my lord; but I will come if you will give me the key."

He gave it to her, and kissed the hand that took it with passionate fervor, and she put it away with a feeling that she was one step nearer her object. Then she turned to the cabinet again, though she had seen nearly everything, without finding the object of her search. At length she put her hand upon what looked like a piece of plain polished wood.

"Is this a drawer or a shelf inside here, my lord?" she asked, suddenly.

He would liked to have said it was neither; but he could not lie with her pure eyes fixed upon his face, so he stammered something about there being nothing interesting in it.

"Find me the opening," she said, sharply; but even as she spoke her hand touched it.

The little door flew open, and disclosed the two phials out of her casket lying in the recess it concealed.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A DESPERATE STEP.

Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.
—*Cowper.*

Lord Nortonshall looked the very picture of guilty confusion as the little door flew open at the touch of Claudia's fingers; but to his surprise she did not seem angry—not even passingly annoyed. She burst into a merry peal of laughter—the low, soft laugh which was one of her greatest attractions on the stage, and which high-born young ladies in sumptuous drawing-rooms tried to imitate, "it was so natural and pretty," they declared.

He could not see that her merriment was feigned, and that her very cheerful and saucy smile covered a sharp pang at her heart. It was enough for him that she *did* laugh.

"Found! found!" she exclaimed, with capitally assumed gayety. "Ah, my lord, I knew it was you who played me such a trick."

It was as much as she could do to hide the trembling of her lips and keep down the quiver that threatened to choke her voice altogether. She did control them, and the hand that she put up to take the phials was as steady as his lordship's own—steadier, indeed, for the peer was trembling visibly with ill-concealed agitation at her discovery.

He was too quick for her, instantaneous as her movement had been; and with a clever jerk of his wrist he secured the tiny bottles.

"You little witch!" he said, putting his hands behind him, to keep them out of her reach, "how did you know I had them?"

Claudia bent her head over her bracelet to conceal the spasm of disappointment and vexation that, do what she would, she could not keep out of her face. It was gone in a moment, and she could look calmly at him, and answer—

"Oh, from two or three things."

"Well!"

"Well, first, then, I have but few friends who are privileged like you."

"I believe it, darling," he murmured, passionately. "Well, what else?"

"Secondly, I have only shown the opening of that casket to one or two; and I know the others have not touched them. And, thirdly—"

"What, thirdly?"

"Thirdly, and lastly, as they say in sermons, I know of no one who would dare to take possession of so dangerous an article as one of those bottles contains. Why, my lord, half a dozen drops of one of those liquids would kill as many men."

"Which is it?"

"Ah, you do not know?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"I have no more idea than the senseless bottles themselves."

"I thought you did not know."

"But you will tell me?"

"Give me the phials, and I will."

"No, you aggravating little charmer, I won't. I'll keep them to tease you, and then you'll live in a perpetual terror of hearing that I've poisoned myself with your Borgia nostrums."

"Such an idea would never enter my head, Lord Nortonshall."

"Indeed."

"Never."

"Why, never? You don't know what your coldness may drive me to do some day."

"Never to self-destruction, I am sure. You love yourself far too well to lay your life down lightly. You are the very last man I should ever suspect of attempting suicide, or even thinking of it."

"I don't think I am likely to take myself out of the world in that fashion. Life has plenty of charms for me, and you are the chief. Come, my beauty, what will you give me to get back these precious bottles?"

"Every gift you ever sent me, my lord; all the gems you have lavished on me since you condescended to say you loved me. I would give them all—nay, all I possess—to have them in my hands once more."

"Not all your diamonds, Claudia—not all your possessions laid down before me—would suffice to unclose my hand; but you can open it with a word."

"Indeed, my lord!"

"Yes; with one little sentence. You can give me what you have refused me hitherto—your love."

"You are still trying to win it by gifts, my lord," she said, speaking gayly, though her lips were quite white with the rapid beating of her heart. "You would still buy it by bribery. You will not believe it is not for *sale*."

"I will give you your phials for one little sentence some women have not found it hard to say. Kiss me, and say, 'Graham Nortonshall, I love you;' and you shall have them, and my whole life with them, to order as you choose in the future."

Claudia's cheeks flushed, and her eyes glistened as she looked at the man who held so much of life and death in his hands. Her rosy lips parted to reply—who shall say what the answer might have been, where so much was at stake?—when a sharp rap at the door startled them both.

Quick as thought, Lord Nortonshall tossed the phials into the cabinet, and locked the door, before he turned to see who the intruder might be. It was only Brown, who had come to say that his master was wanted, and that mademoiselle's carriage was at the door.

Claudia drew her cloak around her, and held out her hand to her host.

"Will you not return me my property?" she said, with a smile.

"On conditions," he replied.

"Those you named—and none other?"

"None other! Come to me to-morrow, and say what I ask you, and your phials, and all I possess in the world shall be yours."

But Claudia's answer was a quiet "Good-night," and a gentle shake of the hand as she passed down-stairs.

"Twas lucky Brown came in," his lordship soliloquized, as he saw her drive away. "She'd have had them somehow if we hadn't been interrupted. Whatever put it into her head to want to pry into that old cabinet to-night? I'll keep them at all hazards, and find out which is which, if I kill all the cats in the neighborhood."

Claudia, on her part, sat in her pretty carriage, with her face bowed on her hands, weeping bitterly. How could she lie to that man, even for the sake of those precious bottles, and tell him that she loved him? One gleam of comfort she had, and that was the knowledge that he did not know which was the poison and which the harmless draught.

"I must go home and think," she said to herself; "for get them somehow from that man I must."

Two days after Lord Nortonshall's Christmas party, Austin Bertram went abruptly into Frank Vavasour's room. The young man was very pale and hollow-eyed, and was rapidly losing all his strength and spirit. He had been talking of going abroad, but confessed that a secret presentiment of coming evil had kept him in England hitherto. Most of his friends advised him, by all means, to go, telling him that England was not all the world, and that there were plenty of places where neither his name nor that of Lord Nortonshall had ever been heard of, and where he would live down the recollection of all he had gone through; but he shook his head.

"I should carry my misery with me," he said to Mr. Bertram. "I should fancy that she was suffering, dying, perhaps, in that brute's power, for he is scarcely human in his wickedness and cruelty to that suffering angel."

"Nortonshall thinks he is the wronged party, you know," replied Mr. Bertram, with a shrug of his shoulders; "and that portion of the world to whom he has told his story think so too. I know better, of course, and I think it will all come right without your running away from it."

Mr. Bertram had reasons of his own for not joining in the general advice to Frank to go abroad. He wanted him just then for purposes of his own, and as the weary days went by, each one seeming longer than the last to his friend in his heart-sickness, he pretended more friendship than ever to the unhappy lover of his other friend's wife.

"Vavasour," he said one day, drawing close up to Frank, and putting his hand on his shoulder, "what would you give to see Al—Lady Nortonshall once more?"

"What would I give? All the world if it were mine! You know that well enough. Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Because I can give you your wish, if you choose to gratify it."

"You!"

"Even so."

"But how?"

"Nay, that's my business till I know whether you will accept my help in the matter."

"Whether I will! Don't you know that I would go through fire and water for a sight of her? I tell you, Bertram, I would die for five minutes of her company once more."

"You shall have more than that at a much lower price—only the promise of your secrecy. You shall have a full hour of her company if you choose."

"Choose! How can you ask? But when and where?"

"To-night—this evening, that is—in her own apartments."

"But how can such a thing be managed without risk to her?"

"Easily."

"But her husband?"

"Will be out the whole evening. I know that for a fact."

"And that new lady's-maid that you spoke of?"

"Miss Langham? Oh, she is an old acquaintance of mine, and I think I can reckon upon her absence. I will take care of her."

"If I could believe you, Bertram!"

"You may."

"You will get me an interview with Alma—with Lady Nortonshall, that is?"

"Oh, call her what you like to me, my boy. Your rhapsodies are safe from repetition from me. Yes, I will get you an interview with her this very evening. I know you mean no harm."

"Harm! No, I would not harm a hair of her dear head for all the wealth of the universe. 'Twill be but to bid her farewell—forever, most likely, for I think when I have seen her once more I can go away, and turn my back upon England for the rest of my life."

"And Claudia—what of her if you go away?"

"Oh, Claudia! Poor girl, I have brought no happiness to her; she would be better without me. But, Bertram, you have not told me yet how to get into Lord Nortonshall's house—my darling's prison, for it is nothing else. You would be welcome enough there; but as for me—"

"You think your reception would be 'the north side o' friendly,' as Baillie Nicol Jarvie says?"

"I do, indeed."

"I am rather inclined to the same notion myself, so I don't intend to let Nortonshall know anything about it. 'What the eye does not see, &c.' The proverb is somewhat musty."

"But the servants will see us go in."

"My lord's house has more doors than one," Mr. Bertram replied, with a meaning look. "I don't intend that we shall pay a visit to the hall-porter. Once inside I have an 'open sesame,' in the shape of a key to the corridor in which my lady's apartments are situated."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"How did you get it?"

"Never mind, so I use it in your service. Now, you write a note to my lady—I will take care that she gets it—and tell her you will be there; and then wait with what patience you may for the evening."

"You will go with me?"

"Only so far as to see you into the house, and draw off the dragon which guards the enchanted portal. You surely don't care for a third party at your tender meeting?"

"For all the harm I shall say to Lady Nortonshall, or she to me, all the world might be there," Frank Vavasour said, nervously.

"No doubt, no doubt," Mr. Bertram said; "but a third party is always *de trop* at such meetings. Love passages are very pretty and pleasant in a duet; in a trio they are always out of harmony."

"You misunderstand me, Bertram. I love Alma, love her so dearly that I would give my life to make her happy; but I don't forget that she is another man's wife, who, scoundrel though he is, shall suffer no wrong nor dishonor at my hands."

"All very pretty and romantic in theory," Austin Bertram said, with ever so slight a sneer; "but I doubt your good intentions would fly to the winds or a better place in practice. You know what becomes of them when they are found useless here. However, that's no business of mine; go, and say and do what you like, only don't exceed your time, and don't betray yourself to any one."

CHAPTER XLV.

FACE TO FACE.

This is truth, the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things. —*Tennyson.*

Frank Vavasour felt no mistrust of the man who thus so officiously offered to aid him. If he had not been so blinded by his love for Alma, and his self-reproach and regret for what had passed, he would have thought of the strangeness of Austin Bertram's conduct in thus seeking to renew an interview which, if again discovered, could have but one ending—disgrace and exposure for himself, and shame and humiliation for the woman he so madly loved.

He could think of nothing but the pleasure which would be more than half pain of seeing her whom he had lost, once more, and he yielded to the voice of the tempter, and wrote a little note to Lady Nortonshall, imploring her to see him, if only for a few minutes.

This he entrusted to Austin Bertram, who duly forwarded it, through Mrs. Langham, which smart Abigail was informed and duly made to comprehend, through the medium of a sovereign, that her absence would be necessary, between the hours of nine and ten that evening.

She promised with alacrity, and pretended not to see her mistress's eager delight over the note, or the tearful, feverish earnestness with which she impatiently waited for the end of the day.

Alma was a very child in some things yet. She could not even hide her feelings from the servant, who was at once her attendant and her jailer.

She did not tell Langham that she was going to permit a visit from her lover of old days; but she allowed her to see that she was elated and expectant, tearful and frightened all at once, and allowed her to draw her own conclusions therefrom.

Frank Vavasour waited with feverish impatience through all the long, weary day for the time to come, as nervously as the imprisoned Alma did. She was still supposed to be ill, and a doctor's carriage appeared daily at the door of her husband's house, the owner of which gossiped mildly about her among his aristocratic patients, and reported her to be in a very weak state, requiring the greatest care.

How far his report was influenced by Lord Nortonshall's purse none knew but themselves; but it was generally understood that he looked very grave, and shook his head when his patient was mentioned, so that, somehow or other, it had come to be believed that Lord Nortonshall's young wife would not live long.

Claudia had passed the two days since the party in a good deal of anxiety and suspense. She had only seen Frank Vavasour once for a few minutes, and then she had nothing cheering to tell him.

It was very terrible to know for a certainty that the phials were in Lord Nortonshall's possession, and not be able to devise any means to regain them. His lordship was so terribly on the alert that to get them by any stratagem was impossible, and Claudia knew him too well to risk even a pretence of affection for him to gain her end.

She was sitting wearily thinking, on the evening when Frank was going to risk the desperate step of seeing Alma, when Dorothy entered with a note.

"A letter, miss," she said.

"A letter! I did not hear the postman."

"No, miss, it came by hand."

"Who brought it?"

"A boy, miss."

"Is he waiting?"

"No, miss. He said there was no answer, and went away directly."

Claudia tore open the envelope and read the contents with considerable surprise. The writing was quite strange to her.

"MADEMOISELLE—If you would like to know how the man you love spends his evenings, look for him to-night at the house of your rival. You will find him in the apartment of my Lady Nortonshall, his first love; faithless to you, treacherous to her.

"A WELL-WISHER.

"P. S.—Between nine and ten."

A bitter smile curled Claudia's pretty lip as she laid down the letter.

"Meant for a stab," she said wearily, "but pointless. Faithless to me! They have overshot the mark there. He cannot be faithless to me—he never loved me! He does love her. Whoever penned that scrawl meant mischief to him and to her—to me, too, perhaps. Can I prevent it, I wonder? I will try. My presence can do no harm, and who knows but I may do some good? I will try. 'Between nine and ten!' Yes, my anonymous friend, I will be there."

Lady Nortonshall received Frank Vavasour's note through the hands of Langham, her maid, little dreaming that that worthy had already made herself mistress of its contents, and was watching her while she read it with eager eyes.

"Who gave you this?" her mistress asked, amazed at receiving it.

"It came by post, my lady."

"By post! Why, there has been no post these two hours. Why was it not sent up to me before?"

"Can't say, I'm sure, your ladyship," was the pert reply.

"And there is no stamp on it. You are telling me a falsehood, Langham."

"I didn't mean to," the girl replied. "I never noticed anything about the stamp. I suppose it has been lying among my lord's letters. Anyway, it had not come to me until a few minutes since."

She fidgeted about the room apparently busy at various duties therein, but in reality watching her mistress's face, as she sat with a perplexed look, holding the letter in her hand.

"What can I do?" Alma was thinking to herself. "How can he be so imprudent—so mad—as to wish to come here? And yet if I might only see him just once, to bid him good-bye, and tell him never to grieve for me again, I think I could bear my husband's spite and cruelty better. But it must not be—my lord might hear of it, might even come and find him here, and then, ah! he could but murder me. But Frank—no, he must not come; but how can I prevent him, how let him know?"

She turned sharply to her maid, who had been listening eagerly to catch any of her murmured sentences, for Alma had spoken unconsciously half aloud.

"Where is Lord Nortonshall?" she asked, suddenly.

"My lord is gone out, my lady," she replied, quietly, looking up from some lace she was examining.

"Out, where?"

"Out of town, I believe."

"How do you know?"

"I heard so down-stairs, my lady. Brown is ordered to sit up for him."

She left the room as she spoke. She was completely puzzled by the question her mistress had put.

"What does she want with my lord?" she asked herself. "Can she be going to tell him? Not she! She hasn't spirit nor courage enough, poor white-faced doll! It's a pretty coil altogether, but I fancy I shall see the end of it some time."

Alma sat motionless with the letter in her hand when the woman had closed the door.

"Things shall take their chance," she said, wearily, to herself. "He is out of the way, and I will see Frank once more. If he finds out afterward, it will be only I that will suffer, and what would I not suffer for his sake?"

She kissed the letter she had received passionately over and over again, and put it into her bosom.

"It is better he should go," she murmured; "much better. I am only a weak woman, and persecution might make me forget my oath at the altar; and that once forgotten, the world would hold nothing for me but his love and faith—nothing, nothing!"

Langham's eye was at the keyhole, and she saw the caress bestowed upon the senseless paper.

"Kisses his letter, does she?" she said, with a spiteful smile upon her lips. "Kiss away, my lady. You'll take your last to-night, if I read the signs of the times aright."

In an hour or so she presented herself before her mistress, and begged leave to go out in the evening. It was an unusual request, and Alma made some remark about it, for Langham had proved herself a very dragon of duennas, and had never left her post for any pleasure of her own before.

"I don't know, I'm sure," she said. "You say Lord Nortonshall is out, Langham?"

"Yes, my lady."

"You take your orders from him, not from me. You know best whether he is likely to approve of it."

"I don't know that my lord need know, if your ladyship does not object," Langham replied. "It is to see a friend from the country, who leaves town to-morrow, so I shall not have another chance."

"As far as my permission is of any use you are welcome to go," Alma said, sadly; "but it is only a mockery to ask me, and no one knows that better than yourself."

"Then I may go, my lady?"

"Oh, certainly."

Langham made many protestations of gratitude, and went her way, leaving her mistress alone, and going out with much parade and fuss, plainly intimating down-stairs that her mistress seemed particularly anxious to get rid of her.

Alma, left alone, counted the minutes with a beating heart. She hardly knew whether she was most pleased or frightened at the thought of meeting her old lover—if, indeed, he were really coming at all. She began to fancy that the note she had received might be some part of a conspiracy to injure her still more, or some strange blunder altogether. She read it over and over again. It was his handwriting—she was sure of that. Had she not often received loving letters from him in the happy days gone by forever?

She was alone, in her own apartments, far away from the rest of the house, and the fleeting moments seemed hours in her impatient anxiety.

Nine o'clock struck at length, the hour named in the note, and she almost held her breath to listen, wondering how he would get into the house, or, once there, find access to her apartments. Suddenly there came a footstep along the corridor; it stopped at the door, and a low tap followed.

"Come in," she said, tremblingly, and in another moment Francis Vavasour stood before her.

He was very pale and thin, and his eyes looked hollow and full of care. They were both sadly changed from the loving, happy boy and girl of a few years before, and the thought of the alteration flashed into the mind of each as they approached one another. Their greeting was a silent one—a meeting of outstretched hands, no more—for their hearts were too full for their lips to speak.

Alma was the first to break the silence.

"Oh, how did you get here?" she asked. "I have longed to see you till I thought my heart would break; and now that you are here, I am sick with terror lest any one should come and find you at my side. Frank, you risk your very life in coming, and as for me, the mention of your name would number my days in this world. But I have seen you, and I can die content."

"Oh, Alma, my darling!" the young man said, passionately, "I care for nothing in all this wide world since I have seen you once more. You do love me still! You have not forgotten the promise you gave me, and the love you swore should be mine, and mine only, for all time and all eternity!"

He would have folded her in his arms as he spoke, but she gently repulsed him.

"No, Frank, no," she said; "never again. I love you as dearly as ever—as I love nothing else in the universe; but I will not break the oath I have sworn at the altar to be faithful to the husband I took, believing you dead. He cannot have his wife's love, but she will not dishonor him. I have seen your face once more, Frank, and I thank Heaven that I have; but do not stay here—bid me farewell, and go."

"Not yet, Alma. Give me one little hour to gaze upon your face, to hear you speak, to fancy this cold world a Heaven once more. You are sadly changed from the bright angel your father gave into my keeping, little thinking how terribly we should be separated in the days to come."

"You are changed, too, Frank—pale, and worn and thin—not a bit like the Frank of the happy days at Westerpark. Oh! what have we done that we should be so bitterly punished?"

"Ah! I ask myself that question daily, hourly, till I almost doubt the justice of Heaven."

"I think of it till I doubt its mercy; but you have not told me how you got in here."

"By the help of a friend."

"A friend—who?"

"I have promised not to tell, even you—but he is faithful."

"Are you sure? I dread treason in every one."

"You need not dread it in him. What was that?"

For one moment he clasped her in his arms, and held her to his breast tight and close, for the tread of an advancing footstep was distinctly heard in the corridor.

(*To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 9.*)

FOR TRUE, PURE LOVE.

BY ANNE L. FORCELLE.

"Oh, Myra!" exclaimed Laura Dalton, for the hundredth time since that young lady's arrival at "the Corners;" "I am desperately glad to have you here—for the whole summer too!—isn't it just delightful?"

Miss George looked up from out the depths of her trunk which she was unpacking, (it was a shabby little affair, by the way, of which she was heartily ashamed,) and smiled deprecatingly.

"It's very kind of you, Laura, to think so much of a poor teacher like me," she said, sweetly; "I hope you won't tire of me. Just look at that poor muslin, my dear, it's a perfect wreck!" turning back to her trunk.

"Never mind," cried Laura, "you can press it out—but as for tiring of you—" here she happened to glance out of the window and immediately sprang up in great confusion. "Oh, good gracious!" she exclaimed, "there's Tom and Jack and 'Fortunatus' Elliot himself!"

Miss George laughed outright this time, a queer little half-hearted laugh, but a very pretty one nevertheless.

"Jack, is it?" she said, shaking her finger playfully at her friend with an arch look. "Oh, Laura, Laura!" and Laura's cheeks grew more crimson than ever at her friend's sally.

A few minutes later the two young ladies made their appearance down-stairs. Laura, bright-faced, smiling and brave with scarlet ribbons in her black hair, and at her throat, while Miss George, walking a little behind her friend, in a dull, gray dress, with a plain collar and cuffs, her light hair a marvel of smoothness, and her eyes cast down, was a perfect and charming picture of child-like simplicity and timidity.

Tom Dalton took pity on her straightway. "Poor little thing!" he thought, as he saw how childish and weak she looked beside his tall sister, with her rich, dark beauty, and strong, self-reliant ways; and after the introductions were over, he took possession of her in his lordly manner, and devoted himself to entertaining her in that patronizing, superior way which young gentlemen so like to assume—but she continued obstinately shy and silent in spite of his efforts.

After awhile Richard Elliot, (otherwise known as "Fortunatus" by his friends,) perceiving that Laura and Jack could get along very well without him, lounged over to where Tom and Miss George were seated; Tom, doing his best to be agreeable, and Miss George winding her slim fingers together and looking distressed.

"Hope I don't intrude," said he, with a sly wink at Tom. "Is there room for me on that sofa beside you, Miss George?" and as Miss George moved her skirts, he sat down good-naturedly, intent on making the little teacher more at ease.

"I say, Loll!" suddenly observed Tom, after the conversation had become more general, "Ned and Ella Carson and three or four others are coming up from the village this evening, and we'll have a time of it if you'll keep Jack and Elliot to tea. Where's ma?"

Laura shrugged her shoulders. "Down with an attack of 'the nerves' in her room, and Nora's gone visiting."

Tom looked rueful, but his face cleared as she went on.

"Myra and I can get tea, though—can't we, Myra?—and so have a good time after all."

"Oh, yes!" cried Miss George, with sudden eagerness, "I can make biscuits," and then as suddenly became silent, turning scarlet at her own temerity—but Laura grasped the idea eagerly.

"That will be splendid!" she cried; "Jack can build the fire; Tom can get a pail of water, and Mr. Elliot can help set the table," and having thus organized a co-operative society, Laura led the way to the kitchen.

Elliot's horses were always his first care, however, and as he sallied forth to the stable to see after them, he encountered Tom bearing the water-pails.

"I say, Dalton," he said, confidentially, "what a little numb-head that George is, eh?—whatever does your sister see in her? She's as homely as a hen, without half the spirit. I am glad I have not got to be in the house with her all summer."

"First impressions," answered Tom, sagely. "I rather like her shy ways, and Loll says she blooms out wonderfully after the first."

"Blooms out!"—yes—if ever anybody "bloomed out," Myra George did that evening. Whether her sudden change was owing to a laughing whisper from Laura, (which whisper was heard behind the pantry door and couched in this somewhat unladylike form of words, "set your cap for Elliot, Myra;—he's a bachelor and worth fifty thousand dollars,") or not, will never be known. Certain it was, however, that when Miss George again met him there was a complete change in her manner.

The biscuits were made in no time, and Tom being deputed to watch them while baking, and Laura and Jack having gone down cellar in search of some cake and preserves, Miss George, who fairly bewildered Richard Elliot by her rapid movements, came in and helped him arrange the table, and was so utterly unlike the "numb-head," which he had so ungallantly considered her, that he could do nothing but stare and wonder.

That supper was a perfect success;—the biscuits were delicious, Laura and Jack were simply perfection, doing the honors at the head and foot of the table, and Miss George was amiability itself, with just enough shyness to make her interesting.

"I wish to goodness those folks weren't coming up to-night!" growled Richard Elliot after the tea things were cleared away, and Miss George came out on the verandah, her face flushed a little by the heat, her light hair a little frowsy around her face, and a dust of flour on her gray dress. "It's so much jollier—just us. Don't you want to see my horses, Miss George? They're rather a neat span." And Miss George smiled and assented, and admired and praised them in her soft way to their owner's great delight, and showing a charming timidity whenever they stirred.

"We're not such strangers as we seem, Mr. Elliot," she said as they slowly went back to the house. "I remember seeing you some years ago, when I was visiting in Wenham. It was at a party, and you were introduced to me. Don't you remember?"

No—Mr. Elliot did not remember.

"How many years ago was it?"

"Five," said Miss George, candidly. "I was just eighteen." And Mr. Elliot not being able to recollect it after all, devoted himself to secretly admiring Miss George for "owning up" to her age so candidly, and entertaining her with stories of his horses, and by giving her some idea of his wealth and importance.

Frankly, Richard Elliot thought that Miss George was supremely honored by his condescension, and like half the girls he knew, ready to fall on her knees to him on the least encouragement. Imagine then his disgust at seeing her during the evening smile as sweetly and look as innocently and entirely happy when talking to "that Carson fellow," who had only the work of his two hands to depend upon in this world, as she had when talking to him.

It was a new sensation to him to be treated on equal terms with others, and it was not a pleasant one; but he, after the manner of his sex, sought to comfort himself by paying particular attention to one of the other young ladies. Therefore he devoted himself so earnestly to pretty Nellie Fowler that she turned quite haughty and cross toward poor John Brooks, and went home to dream about the fine house over the hills, the splendid horses and the untold wealth of "Fortunatus" Elliot.

If he had hoped to tease Miss George, however, he was doomed to disappointment, for she bade him good-night sweetly and calmly, letting her cool, soft little hand lie in his just as long as it had lain in Ned Carson's a moment before, and no longer. Such utter indifference was new to him, and it stung him deeper than anything had for years. Miss George smiled a queer little smile behind her handkerchief as she saw the puzzled and angry look on his face as he went away, but she let no one see it.

"Did you have a pleasant evening?" asked Laura with a yawn when she and her friend were in their chamber; "and how do you like the beaux?"

"A very pleasant evening, and the beaux were charming," answered Miss George, taking the pins out of her hair and arranging it for the night. "Would you crimp your hair, Laurie—just in front?"

"Yes," answered Laura, "by all means," and then, with a little spice of mischief in her voice, "How about 'Fortunatus?' Are you fascinated?"

Miss George turned around slowly, her long hair veiling her white shoulders, and her face looking almost pretty in the golden cloud.

"No," she replied slowly, "not fascinated, but—can you keep a secret, Laurie?"

"Yes," cried Laura, eagerly. "I'll not lisp one word—what is it?"

"Well," said little Miss George, more slowly than before, her pale face turning a shade paler, "I am not fascinated, but I am going to marry him, Laura."

Laura stared, and then laughed.

"You dear little goosey!" she said at last in her blunt, good-natured way, "half the girls in the county have tried to catch him. Do you suppose you—" Here she stopped, biting off her next words with an effort, and blushing scarlet at her ill-breeding.

"Do I suppose I?" echoed Miss George, her light eyes dilating a little as she looked at her friend, but otherwise betraying no sign of anger. "Wait, my love, and see."

"And how about Frank Creston? Oh, Myra, Myra! I didn't mean to hurt you—I didn't indeed." And the repentant girl flung her arms around her friend, conscience-stricken at the stab she had given her.

"It's no matter," said Miss George, after a minute. "That is all over, you know—he died in California last year. Go to bed, dearie, and don't worry."

Long after Laura's eyes were closed, Myra sat on the floor, looking over the contents of a little box which she had taken from her trunk. There was nothing of value in it—a letter or two, written in a sprawling hand, and signed "Your Frank," a slender ring, a lock of brown hair, which curled around her fingers when she took it up, and two or three other things just as valueless; but as Miss George looked at them, there came to her face such a look of tenderness as one sees on the face of a mother as she looks over the little clothes that her dead child once wore.

She lingered long over them, and when at last she laid them away, two bright tears were glittering on the lock of brown hair. Poor little Miss George had been crying over that old love affair; but when she rose to her feet, the lines around her mouth were sharp and hard, and there was a very resolute expression on her pale face.

"Poor Frank!" she said, remorsefully; "poor, poor Frank!" and then going to the window she looked out, the moonlight shining full upon her, and making her look paler than ever, toward the hills behind which was Richard Elliot's house.

She was not a hard-hearted little woman—she was very much the reverse. She was not a new edition of Becky Sharp; but she had deliberately made up her mind to marry "Fortunatus" Elliot, and to marry him simply and solely for his money; and knowing her own strength thoroughly, felt no anxiety for her success.

She would have married Tom Dalton, although he was two or three years (sly, little Miss George!—that "candor" was all very nice, and very charming, but four years added to her statement would have made it much nearer the truth,) younger than herself, for he was good-natured and kind-hearted, and she was mortally tired of "keeping school," but, now that she saw this golden fruit hanging within her reach, she immediately determined to pluck it.

She had studied her new acquaintance narrowly that evening when she had seemed so careless and indifferent, and, having a keen insight into character, knew his "weak points" perfectly, as well as she knew the example under the "First declension" in her Latin lesson, "Musa, musæ," etc.

"Some men," says a wise woman, (albeit she is a terrible flirt,) "have to be flattered into love-making; some have to be driven, and some have to be piqued into it." Miss George knew that a discreet mixture of the first and last methods would be necessary in Richard Elliot's case, and so, standing there in the moonlight, planned out her summer like an old campaigner.

It might be interesting to the reader if space would permit the introduction of a circumstantial report of the proceedings of each day as it passed, but it will not—let it suffice to say that "Fortunatus" Elliot, was, at first, vastly surprised at Miss George's continued indifference, and then seriously annoyed by it. It was not a little exasperating after he had driven over with his pet span and fine carriage (which he did in a few days) to be informed by Miss George that she was very sorry, but she had "half-promised to go down to the pond with Mr. Carson," and "couldn't possibly accept his kind invitation."

Miss George lost her ride, but she knew what she had gained, and was satisfied.

"I say, Tom," said the slighted young gentleman to his friend, a day or two after, "what kind of a girl is your sister's friend, any way?—she's deuced cold-blooded, and I am —— if I can make her out. Has she got any lover anywhere, or what is the matter with her?"

Tom laughed. "I can't make her out myself," he confessed. "I never saw a girl so shy of a flirtation. I've tried to get up one, but it don't go. I don't know," he said, after a little pause. "Loll says she had a love affair with a fellow over in Martindale a year or two ago, but I believe he's dead or gone away or something—it's all over anyway," and he lounged off, leaving his friend more piqued than ever. In spite of himself he had begun to think more frequently, and more warmly of Miss George than he had ever done of any one he had met before. Her little plain, pale face was more charming to him than any of the pretty pink-and-white beauties he knew. He had been so flattered and petted all his life, that he, though a good, generous and modest fellow at first, had come very near being entirely spoiled, and had only escaped being metamorphosed into a complete ninny by a violent rebound into a cynically conceited state. Girls were all "shams" and "humbugs" he declared, and "good for nothing but show," but suddenly this quiet little teacher had come and upset his theories completely. She was not pretty; she was not "dressy" or "stylish;" but "By George!" said Richard, in a burst of confidence to Tom, and blushing a little as Tom winked at his expletive, "By Miss George then, old fellow, that is the only girl I ever saw who wouldn't make a fool of herself for anybody, and could talk sense for half an hour."

He was not in "love" with her—oh, no, nothing of the sort; he liked her; she was quiet, lady-like and sensible, and it hurt his self-conceit to think that she saw nothing in him to distinguish him from her other acquaintances. "Cold-blooded" she certainly seemed, and it was very provoking to find out that, where his utmost endeavors had failed to arouse the slightest interest, another had once awakened love.

That afternoon, however, he found Miss George more approachable. He had ridden over on one of his favorite horses, (his horses were his greatest pride,) and Miss George, with a blue ribbon in her hair, and another at her throat—a wild deviation from the usual severe simplicity of her attire—was very gracious. She went out and patted the horse, and so elated its master by her admiration that he asked her if she would not like to learn to ride, and on her saying gently that it would be "very pleasant," he immediately volunteered to teach her. "I'll come over after tea with my 'Beauty,'" he said, "she's gentle as a lamb, and we'll have a ride, eh, Miss George?"

After tea, true to his word, he came with his two horses, and Miss George, with one of Laura's old skirts pinned over her dress, and a little frightened look on her face, came out to take her first lesson.

It was wonderful how quickly she learned. Richard Elliot could not repress an exclamation of astonishment and admiration as he saw how well she sat in her saddle, and how firmly she held her horse.

"Actually holds her elbows in!" he ob-

served, with delight, "and don't neeaw."

"You're not afraid?" he queried. And she answered, bravely, "N—no, not very." And so they set off on their first ride.

When they returned Richard was in ecstacies. "Except for a little nervousness, you did splendidly for a first lesson, Miss George," he said patronizingly, "next time you will do better." And Miss George thanked him demurely, with a queer little smile, and ran up to her room, where, singular to relate, she buried her head in the bed-clothes and laughed until she cried. Perhaps, had Mr. Elliot known that she had been a fearless rider ever since her childhood, he would not have been so elated by his success as a teacher; luckily he did not, and so the "lessons" went on daily until there was a very friendly understanding established between his pupil and himself. Strictly friendly, however, for on the least hint of flirtation Miss George became unapproachable again.

"I am only a poor teacher," she would say, quietly, "it will not be worth your while to make game of me," and he would bite his lips and give it up.

Of course, little Miss George did not know that this was just the way to lead him on—certainly not, but it had that effect nevertheless.

"She's a queer piece," confided Mr. Elliot to his horse, as he rode homeward from "the Corners" one day. "I like her tremendously, that's a fact, and if she only had a little more spirit—heigh-ho! who knows?" But he had not much time for sentimental reflections, for there was to be a sale of some fine horses over by the railroad, and he had promised to attend, therefore he dismissed the subject for the time being, and rode onward whistling gayly like the light-hearted, happy fellow he was.

The next day he drove up to the Dalton's resplendent with a new horse—a handsome, high-spirited three-year-old, with a skin like black satin, but with an ugly look in his great eyes, and an uneasy, fretful way with his head.

"You've got a regular stunner this time, Elliot," said Tom, after examining his friend's new purchase critically, half envying him his good fortune and wondering how much money he spent during the year for his horses alone. "The handsomest horse you own, by all odds."

"He is a beauty," said his owner, surveying him with calm satisfaction, "a little wild and hard to drive, as yet, but he goes like the wind." And then Laura and Miss George came out and joined in the praise.

"Gentle?" echoed the proud owner, after a timid question from Miss George, "gentle as a kitten. Would you like to drive him around the yard, Miss Myra?"

Miss George looked timidly at the horse and distrustfully at the light racing gig from which Richard had just alighted, and then, suddenly taking courage, answered "Yes."

It was not an easy matter for a lady to mount into that spidery-looking vehicle, and even Laura was astonished to see her shy little Myra attempt it, but she held her peace, and Miss George, assisted by the two gentlemen, was soon seated in triumph. Mr. Elliot was very kind, and showed her how to hold the reins, back and turn, and various other little mysteries about driving, and then Miss George drove around the yard, very slowly and timidly, with Mr. Elliot keeping very close to the horse's head, (for, although he had called him "Gentle as a kitten," he was a bit suspicious of him in his heart).

"I did nicely, did I not?" demanded Miss George, as she came back to the doorway again. "I think—" but what she thought will never be known, for at that moment the colt, actuated by a sudden vicious impulse, started violently, "shied" sharply, and then, after a wicked shake of his handsome head, was off like the wind, bearing with him poor little Miss George.

"Good God!" shouted Elliot, after recovering himself from the first shock of surprise, "the girl will be killed, and it's my fault. Stop him, stop him!" But they were all powerless, and for a few minutes confusion reigned. Laura, for the first and last time in her life, fainted dead away, and Richard Elliot, trembling, despairing, alternately cursing himself, and praying for help, with a face pale as death, and great drops standing on his forehead, rushed to the stable followed by Tom.

"I'll take the fastest one," he cried, "do you follow," and in an incredibly short space of time he was mounted and off like an arrow.

How horrible the sunlight seemed! He hardly dared to look around him as he dashed on, for fear that he should see the ghastly realization of his fears.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" he groaned, over and over. "God help you, my poor darling."

On, on he went, going by the quiet houses like a whirlwind, leaving their inmates wonder-stricken at his reckless riding—gazing straight before him with eyes that saw only a vision of Miss George's pale face, pale as death, with crimson stains on her light hair and fair forehead.

Far behind him came Tom, riding mercilessly; but Elliot never looked around or slackened his speed until his poor horse stumbled and nearly fell, and the saddle, imperfectly secured, slipped and came loose—then, with a muttered curse, he sprang to the ground to fasten it.

"Ye'll have to hurry if ye intend to catch that girl, Elliot," said a loud voice close by, with a coarse laugh; "better telegraph for her instead."

Elliot looked up at the speaker, a sturdy old farmer, with a gleam of hope in his wild eyes. "Have you seen her?" he said slowly; "and she is not killed?"

"Killed? Not a bit of it," answered the man. "She's the best driver I ever saw in my life. When I met her, halfway to Windham, she was holding the reins in one hand and using the whip with the other. That ugly brute of yours has found its master in quick time, and not a merciful one either. Here's her hat, I found in the road as I came along;" and Richard Elliot, with a prayer of thanksgiving in his heart, took the broad hat from his hand and remounted.

"You'll meet her coming back," said the man. "Give me one of those little, soft, fair-faced women for spirit, after all;" and then he drove along, and Tom came thundering down the hill and joined his friend.

Half a mile further on they met the young lady driving coolly and quietly homeward, her hair blown about a little by the wind, her face a little flushed by the sun, but with not the least sign of alarm or fright about her; while the colt, completely subdued, with all the wicked look gone from his eyes, was trotting evenly along, like the mildest and most gentle of horses.

She laughed a little nervously when she saw their pale faces. "Were you frightened?" she said, reining up as she met them. "I had a splendid ride, Mr. Elliot, and have given this 'fiery untamed' a lesson he will not soon forget. Thank you," as he gave her the hat, and then tying the ribbons firmly, she went on with the utmost nonchalance. "One of the wheels is a little damaged—it just grazed the fence in one of me; but you won't scold, will you?"

"Scold!" The look in Richard Elliot's eyes made her blush crimson, although she pretended not to notice it, and then the three went homeward—Tom boisterously joyful, but Richard and Miss George more quiet than usual—Richard too full of thankfulness to join in his friend's loud merriment, and Miss George thinking—of what?

"You are a splendid driver," Elliot said enthusiastically as he helped her to alight, thinking a while, with deep mortification, of his morning's lesson. "Where did you learn?"

"A friend of mine taught me at Martindale, two or three years ago," she answered, giving him a keen little glance, and then running off up-stairs to be petted and cried over by Laura, leaving him in a very perplexed state of mind.

Myra, after escaping from Laura's embraces, sat down quietly to think. She had thought herself heartless since Frank Creston's death, and had resolutely planned out her future life, leaving out entirely the possibility of ever loving any one again. Such a thought would have seemed like treason to poor, dead Frank; but during the summer, in spite of herself, she had begun to feel a friendly liking for the rough, good-natured young fellow whose money first had been her sole object. Sometimes, comparing him with Frank, she felt that he was superior in every way, and looking back into the past, she could see many things clearly to which she had once been blind. Frank's death had, in a measure, glorified him to her. When he was by she had known that he was unreasonably wilful and domineering toward her, and had vaguely felt that he would never make her happy; but when he died she had reproached herself bitterly for all the differences they had ever had, and taken all blame to herself. Frank had been all that was noble and generous—it was she who had been in fault; and so she straightway made a saint of the wild young fellow, whose chief occupation while in the flesh had been to make her life miserable with his jealousy and ill-temper, and to try her nearly to death whenever he could find an opportunity.

To-day it all came back to her, however, and sitting there alone, she confessed to herself that if Frank could come back to her just as he used to be, she could not marry him—and why? Because she felt that the old love was gone forever, and besides—but we will follow her thoughts no further.

When she came down to tea that night there was a softer, girlish look on her face, which was very charming. A whim had seized her to let her long hair float over her shoulders unconfined, save by a ribbon which held it from her face. She wore a plain white dress, with a knot of mignonette on her breast, and Tom, looking up as she entered the room, forgot his politeness entirely, and broke out suddenly:

"By Jove! I never knew you were pretty before, Miss George. I say, Elliot, look at her!"

The little blush which came to her face at this honest admission detracted not one whit from her newfound prettiness, and she thanked him laughingly as she took her seat at the table, nervously conscious that Elliot's eyes were watching her every movement.

"I want to speak to you alone for a minute, Miss George," he said, in an undertone as they left the table and went into the parlor after tea, "can you give me an opportunity?" Miss George was just opening her lips to answer him, when there was a sudden influx of company, and Laura pounced upon her and bore her off to help entertain them, and all privacy was at an end for the evening.

The next day, contrary to Miss George's expectations, Richard Elliot did not come to "the Corners," and Tom betook himself to the city on some business, the hours passed by very slowly.

"He will come to-morrow," said little Miss George to herself as she stood by the window looking toward the hills, but to-morrow he came not.

"Which of you girls has offended Elliot?" demanded Tom that afternoon, and as they both denied having done anything of the kind, he grunted himself, as he said, "a committee of inquiry," and rode away to look up his truant friend.

He did not return until they were all seated at the tea-table, when he took his place, Miss George saw that he looked flushed and troubled, and after a little hesitation the cause was made known.

"It's a deuced hard thing on Elliot," he said, abruptly, striking his knife and fork together savagely, "that confounded company going to smash as it did!"

Miss George looked up, then looked down again suddenly, but said nothing, while Mr. Dalton and his wife and Laura overwhelmed him with questions.

"The fact is," he went on, "all his money, except a very little, was invested in that rotten thing—and it's all gone. That's the long and short of the matter! He got the news yesterday morning, and I'm awfully sorry for him."

Of course there was then a confusion of wonderment and sympathy from all but Miss George, who never opened her lips, and then Laura, coming back to the practical part, as was natural in her, asked if he had lost "everything."

"Of course not," answered Tom, impatiently. "Don't be a fool, child! He's got his farm left and his stock, besides a little money that he had out of that thing, but he's poor as the rest now—poorer than most of us," and so saying, Tom jerked himself out of the room, leaving Laura dissolved in tears at his rudeness, and went off to meditate on the instability of riches.

A little while after, as he sat gloomily on the back steps, he was surprised at the sudden appearance of Miss George, flushed, embarrassed, but evidently very determined.

"Mr. Tom," she said, and then stopped short, but after a moment went on hurriedly, "don't laugh at me, and don't ask me any questions, please, but you see Mr. Elliot, I wish you would send him to come over here. I—I—I want to see him."

Tom sat still and stared at her incredulously.

"You needn't tell him I want to see him, you know," she said, coaxingly, "get him to come for you—and it will be all right."

Evidently some abstruse idea was slowly getting through Tom's brain, for he looked at her very steadily for a minute, and then, jumping to his feet, caught Miss George's hand.

"Miss George," he exclaimed, something suspiciously like tears shining in his honest blue eyes, (for he was a tender-hearted fellow, in spite of his rough ways, and Elliot had told him enough to make him understand the situation,) "Miss George—you're a—you're a trump! Have a mind if I kiss you—just once?" and the happy young fellow suited the action to the word, and the little teacher ran off upstairs with scarlet cheeks, but with a light heart.

What Mr. Elliot said to Miss George, or what Miss George said to Mr. Elliot, we shall never know fully. Certain it is that before the honest little woman would hear one word which he wanted to say, she told him a long story;—told it bravely without a single prevarication or hesitation. All the old love-affair, all her mercenary plans regarding him—everything without an attempt at an excuse or apology—and then—

When Laura and Tom came in, they were confronted by the somewhat astonishing spectacle of shy little Miss George's head (with the fair hair shockingly tumbled) resting confidingly on Richard Elliot's shoulder, and Richard Elliot's arm encircling her trim little waist.

"Wish me joy!" cried the young gentleman, unabashed. "Miss George having failed to entrap a wealthy man, has consented to marry me—Richard Elliot—the farmer."

"And only to think," whispered Miss George—or rather, Mrs. Richard Elliot, a few weeks after her marriage. "I told you that awful story about my age, Richard dear, and made up my mind to marry you just for your money. I'm glad it's gone, for now I—"

"'Now I' what?" demanded, "Richard dear," as she hesitated.

"Now I am very sure that I married you—not for money, but for true, pure love."

WRITTEN IN THE SAND.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

Thus far the course of true love had run smooth. Laurence Esmond and Ethel Lynn were engaged. No cruel father tinctured that sweet season preceding the honeymoon with gall. Benevolent uncles and aunts ransacked their brains and the jewelers' stores for appropriate presents; in fact, things had gone so far that a certain clergyman had added a costly set of the Greek Fathers to his library on the strength of a certain—alas, now uncertain—fee, when society suddenly became aware that the match was broken off! This was a great shock to everybody.

Society was not aware that the fracture was the work of Dorothea D'Esslin, the dashing western belle who had lately come to dazzle the eyes of Philadelphia people; but Dorothea had caused it nevertheless.

This is the way it had occurred.

Ethel Lynn was a paragon. Her father, mother, uncles, aunts, and cousins, had always been accustomed to mention her name with notes of admiration. She was the clever girl of the family, she was the pretty girl of the family, she was the best-regulated, most perfect maiden in existence. Having been a paragon in her own family, Ethel "came out" with a comfortable idea of her own merits, and as she had expectations, people were not unwilling to take her at her own valuation.

Ethel had long been used to give advice, and she could scarcely credit the evidence of her senses when Laurence Esmond presumed to advise *her*—nay, almost dictate to her—on a question of propriety.

Ethel was at home one evening, bent on comfortable enjoyment, in a cosey arm-chair, with an interesting book in her hand and a box of chocolate creams at her elbow.

"I'll be civil in the future," she thought, gazing into the bright grate. "I'll be civil and nothing more. Dorothea always was a reckless girl at Madame Revanche's, and because we struck up a boarding-school friendship there, I know no reason why we should continue it now, particularly as Dorothea is rather fast. Her costume was really *so outré* this afternoon that I wasn't surprised that everybody's notice was attracted by it. Well, I'll not ride out with her again."

And having come to this conclusion, Ethel complacently betook herself to her book and her chocolate creams.

Her composure was rudely disturbed by the ringing of the door-bell.

"How provoking!" she murmured. "Say I'm engaged, Rose," she called to the servant.

But a well-known voice in the hall induced her to countermand the order. She flew to a mirror, smoothed her hair, twitched the ribbon at her throat, cast a comprehensive glance at her reflected figure, and then resumed her seat, said sweetly:

"Oh, it's you! Come in."

Laurence Esmond entered the sitting-room. Ethel held out her hand with a smile, and pointed to a seat near her.

"You may read to me, lazy Laurence," she said, extending the book.

"No," he answered, gravely. "I came to talk."

"As it pleases you," she said. "Talk. Say something funny."

In spite of her playful tone, she saw that he was more serious than usual.

He did not reply to her challenge, but toyed nervously with a paper-weight on the table.

"My lord is silent."

"Well," he began, running his fingers through his hair, "I *have* something to say, and in view of our present relations, I think I am justified in saying it—that is, I hope you'll not be angry."

"I hope so, too. I do not think I've ever given you reason to imagine that my temper is violent."

She was becoming alarmingly dignified. He cleared his throat. A few moments past the task of acting the part of Mentor had seemed to him a very easy one, but now he wished he had not undertaken it.

"You were riding with Miss D'Esslin this afternoon."

"Yes, she called for me in her aunt's carriage. She is an old acquaintance of mine. She was a pupil at Madame Revanche's."

"If I were you, Ethel, I would not continue the acquaintance."

"Why?" she asked, innocently. "I've known her ever so long."

"Well," he returned, with dignity, "it's time you dropped her, for I do not think that she is one of those people whom I should like to call my wife's friends."

"*My* wife!" He spoke as if he already claimed the authority of a husband.

"Rest assured, sir, that your *future* wife will exercise the right of choosing her own friends. I had no suspicion that you were capable of uttering ungentlemanly insinuations against any lady with whom *I* choose to hold companionship—"

"By Jove!" He was getting hot.

"Don't swear," she said, reaching for a chocolate, with provoking coolness.

"If you heard what the men say of her! You and she drove past the Club, and Jack Hardcastle—sneering beast!—asked me why I allowed you to drive with actresses."

"Miss D'Esslin is not an actress, but I tell you there are actresses whom I should esteem it an honor to know."

"No doubt—no doubt," he proceeded, hurriedly. "But Hardcastle wondered if she wasn't a circus-rider, and she acknowledged Laurie Rich's bow—Rich was passing. Now everybody knows that he's a gambler."

"Miss D'Esslin is not a Philadelphian, remember, and she has not the facilities for knowing gamblers that you appear to have. She moves in our best society."

"You must not ride with her again, Ethel, that's all."

"I *must* not?" She stood erect, her eyes brightening.

"No," he returned, in foolish anger. "I'll not have you spoken of in connection with—"

"To hear is to obey." She made a mock obeisance. "In some cases, but not in this. You have warned me in time. Your Bluebeard airs have frightened me. I have always been accustomed to judge for myself in all matters concerning myself. I am unwilling to surrender that right. Good-evening, sir."

She laid a sparkling ring on the table, and, with a stately mien, left the room.

He pushed the ring into his pocket, and went out. He was astonished, angry, yet uncertain whether he had been in fault or not. Her self pride was wounded. She was as angry with herself as with him. She could not understand how he or anybody else dared question or criticise her conduct.

"Talk about woman-gossips," she cogitated, "men-gossips are infinitely worse, with their clubs and nonsense." And then her irritation dissolved in tears.

And so the engagement between Ethel Lynn and Laurence Esmond was broken off. Parents, uncles, aunts and cousin, all united in the opinion that Laurence was a brute, and with one voice congratulated her on her narrow escape.

She was driven nearly wild by the flood of remark and condolence which poured in upon her from the "dear five hundred" friends who called to hear "the rights of the story."

Gus Mendenhall—old Gus, whose lemon-colored kids, immaculate shirt-bosom and faultless get-up, had been known every afternoon on Chestnut street for years—announced himself as a candidate for the hand of Ethel.

It was rumored that Mr. Lynn was wealthy, and when it was rumored that Gus Mendenhall had proposed to Ethel and been accepted, society's estimate of Mr. Lynn's money value increased amazingly, for everybody was aware that the old beau would not throw himself away for nothing, even though his wife should be young and pretty.

Mendenhall had watched his opportunity, and had thrown himself at Ethel's feet while she was still smarting under the irritation occasioned by Laurence Esmond's well-meant interference. And she madly listened to the suave speeches of the ancient exquisite, and from a mixture of motives, defiance and wounded pride being prominent, she promised to be his wife.

The instant the consenting words were spoken she regretted them. A week of unavailing regret and self-torture followed; but her promise had been given, and she was too proud to entreat Mendenhall to release her.

She was paler and more silent than usual; but her admiring relatives prepared to welcome the new bridegroom, unconscious of her anguish.

During this saddest week in Ethel's life, Laurence Esmond never called. It was as well, perhaps, that he did not, for at this time her pride was stronger than her sorrow.

When they did meet it was later, when time and absence had taught her the worth of him whom she had cast away.

The wedding-day had been named—the fifteenth of September. The date was now the middle of August; old Mendenhall and the Lynns were sojourning at a small town on the coast of New Jersey.

On that morning Mendenhall left his hotel, to take his usual stroll to the small cottage which the Lynns rented. He had just crossed the lawn in front of the hotel when a small boy intercepted him.

"Major Mendenhall, sir?" asked the small boy.

(Gus Mendenhall had been a major at some distant period of his existence—in 1812, malicious people hinted.)

"I am Major Mendenhall." And he stretched out his hand to receive a yellow envelope, and then gracefully waved the small boy away. The boy went, whistling, "Folks that put on Airs."

The yellow envelope contained a telegram which Mendenhall read, with several unedifying exclamations.

"Cuisine & Co. failed! Curse my luck! I'm in for it now!"

He groaned, hit his gouty foot against a stone, and groaned again. Between physical and mental anguish, the skilfully "made up" face of the old beau offered a strange spectacle.

He turned his face from the Lynn cottage, and walked toward the beach.

Down on the beach, under the shadow of a great boulder, sat Ethel Lynn. The sea stretched before her, sparkling and dimpling in the summer sunlight. She did not notice its varying beauty. Her thoughts had flown away.

Since her quarrel with Laurence Esmond, she had known no happy day. These weary, unrestful days had greatly changed her. Her face was sad and pale, but more spirituelle and refined. The old expression of self-sufficient confidence had left it.

With the end of her parasol she was idly and unconsciously tracing a name in the firm, white sand.

Suddenly a man's shadow came between her and the sun.

She looked up. It was Laurence Esmond. She arose trembling. He started toward her impulsively, and then halted.

"Ethel!"

"Mr. Esmond." She made an attempt at coolness and self-possession.

"It is true, then?"

"What is true?" Ethel asked, with averted face.

"That you are engaged to Mendenhall."

"It is true."

"And you will be his wife?"

"I have promised."

"Ethel, I was wrong—I was mad on that night." He spoke passionately, outstretching his hands with involuntary dramatic fervor.

"Forgive me. You can never love this man. You and he will be utterly miserable. Recall the—"

"I will hear no more on the subject. The past is past. I have promised, I repeat, to be Major Mendenhall's wife."

"You never loved me, Ethel Lynn," he said, bitterly, walking away. He turned again as if for one last look, and his eye caught the writing on the sand. His own name was traced there.

"Ethel," he said, with a new tone of joy in his voice. "You love me yet. You made a promise to me once. You *must* be mine."

"I cannot," she sobbed. "Oh, [Laurence, leave me!—leave me!"

Major Mendenhall stepped from the other side of the boulder.

Strolling along the beach with the words of the terrible telegraphic message on his mind, the sound of the voices had attracted his attention. He had paused for a moment and distinctly heard the colloquy between the lovers. The cloud of perplexity vanished from his brow. He rubbed his hands ecstatically, and with beaming eyes advanced to Ethel, and took her hand.

"Take her, Mr. Esmond," he said, smiling upon the amazed Laurence. "Take her. I return her to you. Without her, life will be valueless, but I bow to my fate. I cannot accept her hand without her heart. She is yours."

The old beau delivered this speech with the air of a solemn father on the stage. To an uninterested spectator, the whole scene would have appeared rather ridiculous. To the lovers, there was no such element in it. It lifted a heavy load from both their hearts. Without speaking, Ethel put her hand on Laurence's arm.

"The major will not have me, you see," she murmured, blushing. "Will you?"

His look answered her.

"She's off my hands, anyhow," muttered the major, in devout thankfulness. "I ought to warn the youngster, though. I say, Esmond," he whispered, "I suppose you don't know that Cuisine & Co. have failed, and that Mr. Lynn's money is bound up in the firm—"

"I knew it yesterday," fiercely returned Laurence; "and you have given this angel up on that account, you mercenary soo—"

"Bless you—bless you, and be happy!" said the major, hastily moving away. He was conveniently deaf at times.

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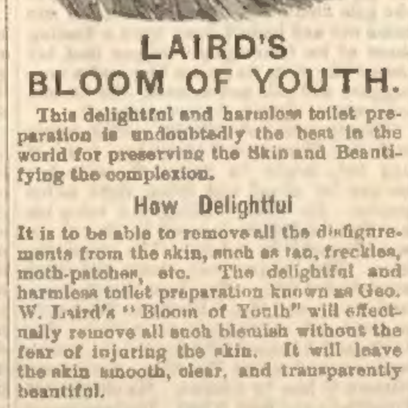

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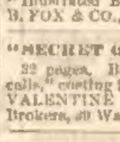

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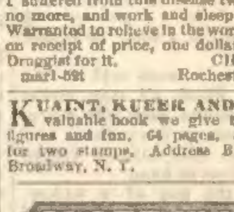

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"The world is ever as we take it,
And life, dear child, is what we make it."

Thus spoke a grandam bent with care,
To little Mabel, flushed and fair.

But Mabel took no heed that day
Of what she heard her grandam say.

Years after, when no more a child,
Her path in life seemed dark and wild,

Back to her heart the memory came
Of the quaint utterance of the dame:

"The world, dear child, is as we take it,
And life, be sure, is what we make it."

She cleared her brow, and smiling thought,
'Tis even as the good soul taught!

"And half my woes thus quickly cured,
The other half may be endured."

No more her heart its shadow wore;
She grew a little child once more.

A little child in love and trust,
She took the world (as we, too, must)

In happy mood; and lo! it grew
Brighter and brighter to her view.

She made of life (as we, too, should)
A joy! and lo! all things were good

And fair to her, as in God's sight,
When first he said, "Let there be light."

THE SHOALS LIGHTHOUSE.

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS.

BY CHAS. HEBER CLARK.

"Well, Bessie, so the time has come at last."

"No, Tom, not quite yet. This is only the twenty-third, you know. Two more days; then Christmas, and then our wedding."

"Oh, well," replied Tom, "the great event is so near, that after our long waiting the two days seem as nothing."

"A great many wonderful things may happen in two days, Tom."

"Yes, but nothing can happen to separate us, Bessie. You are mine and I am yours. Our lives join together now, and no man may part them asunder."

"Oh, I hope and believe there may be nothing to interfere with our happiness," said Bessie. "The sky is very bright for us now, and I cannot conceive of any calamity which could befall us before our wedding."

"Of course not," replied Tom. "Don't think of such a thing. It will be good-bye to you to-day, good-bye to-morrow, and then no more farewells forever, for we shall be man and wife. But maybe I won't be here to-morrow, though, until late in the evening."

"Why?" asked Bessie.

"Because I think I shall go duck-shooting over at the Shoals with Jan Eckels, and it is hardly likely I shall get back before supper time."

"Who is Jan Eckels?" inquired Bessie.

"Why, a young Norwegian, a fisherman who lives on Star Island. He says the gunning around there is splendid now, and he is going to take me over in his boat in the morning."

"Isn't it a little dangerous out on the open sea at this season, Tom?"

"Not a bit when the weather is fine. Jan is a first-rate sailor, and we won't go, you know, if there is danger of a storm. I will be around to-morrow night early, Bessie, for certain."

"I hope so," said Bessie. "But Tom, dear, for fear you shouldn't get back in time, I've half a notion to give you your Christmas present now. Shall I?"

"You might as well, Bess. I have yours in my pocket now. Let's exchange to-night."

Bessie bounced out of the room and returned presently with a tiny morocco box. Tom took from his pocket a case, from which he removed a beautiful locket and chain, which he fastened upon Bessie's neck.

"Oh, Tom! isn't it beautiful? I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you. It is the very thing I wanted. It was very, very kind of you to find out what I wished. And now let me give you yours. Hold out your hand, sir! There!"

And Bessie placed upon her lover's finger a dainty amethyst ring.

"It's magnificent," exclaimed Tom, holding it at a distance and admiring the stone.

"And I have had an inscription placed inside," said Bessie.

"'*From Bessie Archer to Thomas Freeborn, Christmas*, 186–.'

"It is the last thing Bessie Archer will give you, Tom. Before present-giving time comes round again, I shall be Bessie Freeborn."

Then the good-nights were said in that sweet old fashion which all true lovers know, and so they parted, each with a soul full of pure happiness in the present, and of tender hope for that blissful future which seemed so close at hand.

Tom Freeborn, the son of a widow, whose only child he was, and who loved him with such deep affection that she was almost jealous of the fair girl who had come to share his heart, returned to his home and began his preparations for the morrow's expedition. Bessie Archer, the only daughter of a wealthy banker, and a woman whose lovely face was but the outward sign of the purity which crowned her character, retired to rest, to wait amid pleasant dreams the morrow which would bring her nearer to the consummation of her happiness.

The town of Portsmouth, N. H., in which these persons lived, lies close upon a river which flows in tortuous course until, a mile or two below the wharves, it empties into the sea. Twelve miles beyond, out in the ocean, lie the Isles of Shoals, a group of small islands, some of which are inhabited, one of which upreara a lighthouse boldly from its cliffs, and others of which have no signs of man's presence, but are the resort of the wild geese and swans and ducks, of the white owl and the sea-gull, the fish-hawk and the stormy petrel.

From the little settlement upon the rocky hill of Star Island came Jan Eckels on that bright December morning in his open boat, containing two masts, as is the fashion in that region with the craft of the fishermen. He belonged to a family of Norwegians, many of whom are found upon the islands and upon the mainland in the vicinity; and he handled his little shell of a boat with the dexterity of one who had spent his life upon the water.

Tom was waiting for him at the wharf when he arrived, but as the tide was running swiftly up the channel and was nearly at the flood, Jan determined to wait for it to turn rather than to try to beat down the crooked stream against it. So, when the two sportsmen finally set out upon their journey, it was after ten o'clock, and two hours more would elapse before they could reach Duck Island, their destination. But the day, though cold, was clear and beautiful, and the wind as it filled the sails and swept the boat over the rough waters gave them no discomfort, for they were warmly clad and well used to such exposure.

There was splendid sport at the island. Freeborn and Eckels landed in a small cove where the surf did not beat, and fastening the boat's painter to a rock, they took up their guns and started for the eastern shore. All the afternoon they tramped about over the rugged and broken surface of the place, creeping first behind one boulder and then another as they approached the game, until, when the sun approached the horizon, they counted up a goodly number of black ducks and three or four superb swans. As they were looking over the trophies of their sport and placing them in the bags, Eckels said—

"We had better hurry, Mr. Freeborn. It looks pretty dark yonder, and I'm afeard we'll have a squall."

"Not much of a one I hope," replied Tom, beginning to move toward the boat. "I don't care to get a wetting such a cold night as this. We should freeze to death."

"We must make good time then," said Eckels, "for it's goin' to rain, certain, and I'm afeard of a big blow."

They reached the boat, and tossed the game and the fowling-pieces into it, and then, jumping in themselves, Jan hastily raised the sails, and they started toward Portsmouth. The wind blew strongly from the northwest, and the clouds came scurrying thick and fast overhead, becoming bleaker and blacker every moment, while the surface of the sea was covered with the white-caps, the great waves rolling in mightier masses each moment as the wind grew fiercer.

"I'm afeard we won't make it," said Jan, with a scared look upon his face. "There'll be a gale before we reach the harbor, and then take care! We'll have trouble, Mr. Freeborn."

"Well, let's drive ahead and do our best," replied Tom, gloomily.

"Look!—look there!—there it comes, sure enough!" shouted Jan. "The squall has got us!"

Tom did look, and far out upon the sea he could perceive the waves in fearful tumult, while above them a dense white cloud swept forward with terrible velocity. In a moment they were blinded by a storm of snow which dashed into their faces, and while the wind roared about their ears with a shriek such as might have come from the lips of a host of maddened fiends, their boat was tossed about in the angry billows with such violence that it seemed as if it must go to pieces. But Jan clung to the helm, and desperately strove to guide the craft, and he still showed in his face that he had a brave hope of weathering the storm. He was about to say a cheerful word to Tom, when the handle was wrenched from his grasp, and as he caught it again, a cry of agonizing despair reached Tom through the noise of the tempest.

"The rudder is gone!" shrieked Jan; "we are lost! we are lost!"

The boat, no longer controlled by the helm, whirled around with her broadside to the wind, and in an instant there was a crash as both masts were swept over the side, one of them striking Jan's arm in its descent, and wounding him severely. But the staunch little ship did not capsize. She was built for rough work, and she remained upright. Jan sank upon the floor in utter helplessness, and cried like a child. He could do nothing in his crippled condition, even if there was anything to be done. But the waves now and then swept over the boat, and she was gradually filling with water, so Tom, after placing Jan upon one of the thwarts, went to work to bail the water out as fast as possible. While he was thus busy, a cry from Jan caused him to look up; they were hurrying past the White Island lighthouse, and they were so close to it, that through the dusk they could see the keeper upon the shore making frantic gestures to them. But, alas! no help could come to them.

They dashed by at frightful speed, and in a moment the tall shaft of the lighthouse was but a white speck amid the gloom. The air became colder; each wave that dashed into the boat covered the unhappy men with a sheet of ice, and the spray hurled upward by the sea in its fury fell upon them in icy particles which stung their frozen faces until the agony became almost unendurable. Tom kept his blood in active circulation by his exertions to relieve the boat from the water. But Jan—before the lighthouse was an hour behind, Jan suddenly fell prone upon the boat's floor, and lay there motionless. Tom leaped to his side and tried to lift him. He wore an icy coat of mail from head to foot; his arm was pulseless, his eyes were set in a stony glare, and his breathing had ceased. His soul had gone out from the midst of that wild and terrible tumult of the elements into the land of everlasting peace.

The tears came into Tom's eyes as he looked down upon the face of his dead comrade, and he broke forth into loud lamentations. But he could not pause from his labor to indulge in mourning. The boat was filling each moment, and nothing but desperate exertion remained between him and certain death. The boat itself was now cased in ice and sank deeply into the water, and Tom perceived that he must bail more rapidly or be swallowed up in the angry sea.

Onward and onward he hurried before the pitiless blast, the gale seeming to increase in fury every moment. He saw the light on Cape Cod as he went swirling by in the darkness, and he knew that he had come nearly a hundred miles upon that frightful voyage. Where would it end? He did not dare to think. He must work, work desperately, savagely, with every energy of soul and body. And so with fierce unceasing toil, which seemed too terrible to be endured much longer, with now a thought that it would be better to stop and let the end come, then with a remembrance of Bessie and of the blessedness of life, and with hope of rescue and salvation, he struggled on until daylight came; and as the gale died away, little by little, the sun came out and looked down upon a floating mass of ice bearing up a corpse that lay statue-like upon its frozen bier and a man haggard and pale and covered, like his lost companion, with a glittering shroud.

Utterly worn out with his awful battle with fate, Tom looked about him to see if any help might be near. He espied a barque far ahead and lying right in his course. He ceased bailing, and tying his handkerchief to an oar and holding it upward waved it to and fro. The signal was seen. The barque went about and stood straight for him. The boat swept closer and closer, and Tom's heart was filled with a great and eager hope of rescue. The boat dashed beneath the bow of the vessel, and coursed along its side. A rope was thrown to him by a sailor. He clutched it frantically and held it fast. The boat swept away beneath him, and he plunged into the sea. "He is lost," was the cry that reached him from the deck.

Not so. He thrust his arm through the loop in the rope, a sturdy pull from the sailor tightened the slip-knot, and in a moment he lay upon the deck, while Jan, in his icy tomb, went hurtling far, far out to sea, and to burial beneath the rolling billows.

And did Thomas Freeborn never come back?

Wait.

A great dread filled two hearts in Portsmouth on the night of the storm, when hour after hour passed and Tom did not return. Bessie was very hopeful though, for she thought her lover might have returned too late to visit her, and had gone home. But his mother spent the night in agony, fearing the worst, and yet half believing that her boy and his companion had landed upon one of the islands and remained there, rather than to attempt the passage of that raging sea.

In the morning Bessie called early at Mrs. Freeborn's and was greatly alarmed to find that Tom was not at home. Both women then sought Bessie's father for advice, and he instantly dispatched a boat to the islands to discover if Tom and Eckels had spent the night there.

Four or five hours elapsed before the messenger returned; and meantime Bessie and Mrs. Freeborn endured torture, for they were certain Tom would have come back early in the morning, if he had been detained at the Shoals. And when the boatman at last presented himself, he had a sad, sad story to tell. He had talked with the keeper of the lighthouse, who said that a terrible squall struck the islands late yesterday afternoon, and that while he stood upon the rocks of the shore he had seen Jan's boat go flying past in the tempest with masts and rudder gone, with Jan sitting motionless upon the thwart—and with Tom desperately striving to keep the boat from sinking. There could be no doubt, the keeper said, that they were lost. No boat could live in such a sea, and this one was a wreck when it reached the lighthouse.

A wild cry of anguish came from Bessie's lips at this recital, while Mrs. Freeborn gave herself up to frantic grief. The two women, somewhat estranged before, were brought close together by their common sorrow. Both had dearly loved the poor drowned lad, and both were stricken with the same intense and overwhelming anguish. And as Bessie strove, amid her own suffering, to comfort the woman who was thus left desolate in the world, the flame of a new affection was kindled between them, and the mother loved the girl because her son had loved her; while Bessie felt that in Tom's mother she could find the only person in the world who could give her fullest compassion and sympathy in her great misery.

And so these two became fast friends. Bessie was often at Mrs. Freeborn's house, and as the weeks and months passed away, and no tidings came of poor Tom, all hope faded out of their hearts, and they gave up forever the expectation of seeing him again. But they talked to each other of him, and in the rehearsal of his characteristics, and the recital of the events with which each was familiar in his life, they found strong consolation in their communion with each other.

A year passed away. Christmas came again, with its solemn memories, and brought no joy to Bessie or to Mrs. Freeborn. Then another year came and went; and the two women, one gray and haggard, with deep furrows upon her brow, and with the story of a great sorrow written upon her face; the other still wearing the bloom of youth, still beautiful and full of physical grace and vigor, but grave and sad, with the memory of the affliction which was ever fresh in her mind—these two were yet companions. But, a month afterward, Mrs. Freeborn died, suddenly, while Bessie was absent from home, and are she had recovered from the shock caused by this intelligence, her father's firm failed, and he came home to her one night a beggar. Mrs. Freeborn had intended to give Tom's inheritance to Bessie, but alas! she died without making a will, and her relatives took all of her property.

After trying in vain for several months to obtain employment, Mr. Archer accepted an appointment as keeper of the lighthouse on White Island, and there upon that narrow rock, far from the great world and almost isolated from humanity, the two established their home. In this lonely spot the summer and autumn passed, and during the pleasant weather Bessie would often seat herself upon the shore where the light-keeper on that fatal night had seen Jan's boat coursing through the torrent, and try to picture to herself the dreadful scene. And never did the wind howl about their little dwelling or the roaring sea hurl its mighty surges against the lighthouse and the barrier of rocks around it, but Bessie would think of the storm that swept away her darling and of the horror of that death amid the seething waves.

Winter came, and with it many a furious war of the elements, during which Bessie's heart sometimes was filled with fear lest even they, upon that tiny spot of earth and stone, might be submerged by the mountain waves which rolled in awful volume against the shore. The weary days and nights went by and Christmas eve came again, bringing with it the most terrible gale that the Archers had ever encountered since their hermitage began. The sea was a boiling cauldron in which the waters were flung wildly to and fro, the white crests which crowned the waves being merged in one weltering mass of foam that shone strangely out from the black darkness of the night. The lantern overhead in the lighthouse shot its red and white light far out over the waters, warning mariners to avoid the treacherous rocks which here lurk close beneath the surface; and against the thick glass which surrounded the light, swarms of birds, fleeing before the howling storm, were dashed and fell crushed and dead among the boulders beneath. The wind shrieked and screamed so fearfully about the low hut at the foot of the tower, that the two occupants could scarce hear their own voices even when they spoke in loudest tones.

"It is an awful night, Bessie," said Mr. Archer. "Heaven help any poor sailors who are caught in this neighborhood in such a storm. It will be certain death for them."

Before Bessie could reply a dull thud was heard outside above the roar of the tempest. Then another and another.

"They are signal guns!" exclaimed Mr. Archer, leaping to his feet. "Hark! there they are again! They are firing rapidly and the vessel is evidently close at hand!"

The two rushed to the window and looked out. Nothing could be seen but the thick gloom and that ghastly white surface of the restless sea. Again the guns were heard, and then the sound ceased. Bessie and her father sat silently for awhile before the fire, each thinking of the horrors which the morrow's sun might reveal to them, and at last Mr. Archer said:

"She has gone ashore I fear either on Duck Island or on Smutty Nose. It is the latter, I think, or we should not have heard her guns so plainly."

And Bessie clasped her father's hand tightly and thought how poor Tom had braved such a tempest and had gone down into the fathomless depths to which these unfortunate men even now were sinking. Sleep was impossible on such a night, and Bessie kept watch with her father, who must remain awake to charge the lamps every hour with fresh supplies of oil.

It was after midnight when the guns were heard, and Bessie sat by the fireside until the early dawn, when her father ascended the tower to extinguish the lights. Mr. Archer had been gone but a few moments when he came running down in extreme agitation. As he entered the room he exclaimed, "Bessie, let us go out to the beach quickly. I think a body has been washed ashore. I saw it from the lantern. Come!" And the two hurried through the doorway. The rain had ceased, and the wind, though blowing strongly from the west, had lost much of its violence. They ran down the pathway to the spot where Bessie had so often stood and imagined Tom's terrible journey, and there as Mr. Archer had supposed lay the body of a drowned sailor. He had lashed himself to a spar, and had probably remained afloat for some time; but the pitiless waves had swept over and over him until he had ceased to breathe, and then they had cast him out from their deadly embrace upon this morsel of kindly mother earth for Christian burial. He was a tall, manly fellow, with bronzed and rugged face, strong arms, a flowing beard and dark-brown hair. Mr. Archer cut away the lashings, and they carried him up to the house and placed him before the fire. They determined to attempt his resuscitation, although they had little hope of effecting it, for the sailor had probably been in the water, dead, for several hours.

While Mr. Archer breathed into the man's lungs, Bessie determined to chafe his hands. She seized one of them for the purpose, when a loud exclamation from her attracted her father's attention. Bessie was examining an amethyst ring upon the man's finger, while her face grew pale as death. She drew the ring away and looked upon the inside of it; then she gazed steadfastly for a moment in the sailor's face, and with a faint cry swooned away. Mr. Archer picked up the fallen ring from the floor and read the inscription in it. It was this—

"*From Bessie Archer to Thomas Freeborn, Christmas*, 186–."

This, indeed, was Tom, come back in this strange and dreadful fashion, and led, by what mysterious fate? to the very feet of the woman he had loved. And when Bessie had recovered herself, she and her father went to work again with renewed earnestness, both with eager hope; but Bessie with a mighty longing in her heart, which was too overpowering for language.

Half an hour passed, and Mr. Archer thought he perceived a convulsive movement of the chest. They redoubled their exertions, and presently the breast heaved slowly and painfully, and a sigh escaped from the lips. In a few moments the spark of life which had been so nearly extinguished was rekindled, and the patient was carried to the bed, where, after a few draughts of brandy, consciousness returned, and Tom, suffering intensely, lay moaning and sighing, too feeble to look upon those who had saved him. Then he fell into a deep sleep, and before he awoke Mr. Archer sent for assistance to Star Island. He feared the shock would be fatal if Tom should see and know him or Bessie while he was so ill.

But careful and tender nursing soon gave him strength, and in a few days Mr. Archer entered the room. Tom instantly recognized him; but even his great surprise did not keep back the words that came first to his lips, "Is Bessie still alive?" And then Mr. Archer sat beside Tom and told the whole story of his failure, their life at the lighthouse and his rescue; and when Bessie entered at his summons, he went out and left those two alone in their great joy. It was too sacred an occasion for the presence of another. It was the blissful ending of a long night of pain and sorrow and bereavement, the dawn of a day of happiness and peace.

Tom had a very extended story to tell of his adventures, but we must make it a brief one here. The vessel which rescued him from the boat was a whaler, outward bound for the Pacific, and he remained upon her for nearly two years. She was driven ashore near Cape Horn and wrecked as she was coming home, and Tom and the other survivors were left upon the desolate coast in a most forlorn condition for several months. Finally they were taken off by a brig bound for Liverpool, and when that port was reached, Tom found a vessel that was about to sail for Portland, Maine. He shipped with her as a sailor before the mast, and just as she was about to end her voyage, she was caught in the great storm and driven on Smutty Nose Island. Tom said he knew the locality at once, and determined to try to save himself by lashing himself to a spar. He became unconscious in the water, and awoke to find himself saved.

Before another Christmas came around Tom and Bessie were married, and with his mother's fortune, which he claimed and secured, he gave to Bessie and her father a comfortable home, where they lived together in such complete felicity as is surely granted when from a great tribulation the soul comes at last into the full fruition of its hopes and to the serenity of perfect rest.

A DOMESTIC MAN.

IRASCIBLE OLD PARTY.—"Conductor, why didn't you wake me, as I asked you? Here I am miles beyond my station!"

CONDUCTOR.—"I did try, sir, but all I could get you to say was 'All right, Maria, get the children their breakfast, and I'll be down in a minute!'"

THE TWO STARS.

BY J. BENEDICT.

There exists a tradition that a wish will be fulfilled if expressed while a star is falling.

It was here that we lingered, Carina,
One sweet summer night by the sea,
When the world seemed an Eden of gladness,
And only for you and for me.

It was here that your blue eyes so tender
Gave back all I whispered of love,
As we gazed at two stars that together
Were smiling in Heaven above.

But your little hand trembled, Carina—
We wished what was never to be—
As one star fell, and only the other
Kept watch over you, love, and me.

You are far from my side now, Carina;
I linger alone by the sea;
For my love-dream is o'er, and a shadow
Has darkened between you and me.

And I try to forget you, but ever
There smiles through the mist of my tears
Your old look of love, like a sunbeam
That gleams out of dear bygone years.

And I think of the two stars, Carina,
And the wish that was never to be,
Till a voice at my heart whispers softly
Of a Heaven still for you and for me.

A Three-Cent Plate of Ice Cream for Three.

BY MARK EDWARDS.

A gentleman and two ladies, all well-dressed, and evidently people of culture, one early summer afternoon entered a fashionable down-town restaurant.

After they had seated themselves about the centre of the establishment, the waiter approached to receive their orders.

"A three-cent plate of ice cream," said the gentleman quietly.

The waiter stared.

"And spoons for three," added the gentleman.

The waiter grinned in a sort of surprise, but the quiet and almost grave faces of the ladies and the gentleman underwent no change.

"Hasten, if you please," directed the latter to the waiter, who looked as if he thought a joke was to be played upon him.

He left them, however, and returned with the desired refreshment.

By this time the attention of several other occupants of the place was directed to the three, but they conducted themselves as if entirely oblivious of anything remarkable in their actions.

Each took a spoon, and while conversing upon some topic remote from the subject that was interesting those who watched them, daintily helped themselves to the delicacy before them.

When they had finished the gentleman *paid his bill*, and immediately departed with his companions. As they reached the street, the first smiles—so successfully repressed till now—broke over their countenances.

"We have won!" cried the gentleman, delightedly. "I congratulate you and myself, ladies, and thank you for your admirable co-operation."

Then there was a hearty and laughing return of compliments.

"But were the witnesses there to testify to our success?" asked one of the ladies.

"I dared not look round to see."

"Yes, yes; I saw Mr. Oram watching us and endeavoring to catch my eye," replied the gentleman. "I think that he will acknowledge that our gravity was unimpeachable."

And the three proceeded up the street, highly delighted with the success of their undertaking.

They had staked a trifling amount on their ability to enter the saloon, call for and receive the specified amount of the refreshment, and eat it from the same plate—all without a smile or the slightest exhibition of amused feeling.

Entering an elegant mansion a half hour later, they were there joined by Mr. Oram; and over a more substantial feast, and in the presence of a gay party of their friends, the successful wager was discussed, and the reward claimed.

If you think, reader, that their performance was an easy thing to do, try it yourself some day with two humor-loving friends to bear you company.

☞ It is related that a grocer in Lowell, Mass., had a chest of tea stolen from in front of his store, several weeks ago, and not relishing such treatment, he set an ingenious trap to catch the thieves, which proved successful. He filled a large chest with sawdust, first boring a hole in the bottom, and set it out in front of the shop. About seven o'clock, while the attention of the men in the shop was diverted, the chest was stolen. Its whereabouts was easily found by means of the sawdust trail, though the thief was not then found. He was subsequently arrested, however.

Answers to Correspondents.

PAY YOUR POSTAGE.—Authors and others often send us letters and manuscripts not fully paid. In these cases the Department here enforces payment of the deficiency—which we either have to pay, or to decline receiving the letters or manuscripts. Authors will also bear in mind that the Department now requires letter postage on all manuscripts—therefore it is often cheaper, as it is always safer, to send large packages by express.

WE cannot undertake to answer questions relating to the acceptance or rejection of manuscripts in this column. And there is no occasion of writing to ask whether we will examine a manuscript. Send it on, and we will examine it; keeping a copy, to avoid all danger of loss—as we do not hold ourselves responsible for the safe return of manuscript.

RITA, (Phila.,) asks: "1st. Did the opera by Johann Sebastian Bach, entitled 'The Wisdom of the Magistracy in the Establishment of Breweries,' ever exist? If so, I would like to purchase it at any price. 2d. Where can I find the hymn-tune called 'Dramclog?' 3d. Has the 'Princess of Thule' been published yet? 4th. Has Mrs. Broughton written any more books lately?" 1st. Only a few of Bach's works were published during his life, but nearly all have appeared since his death, edited by the Bach Society of Leipsic. They amount to many hundreds in number, and it is probable that the piece you inquire after, if such a piece really exists, is among them. 2d. At any good music-store, we suppose, if it can be obtained at all. 3d. Not to our knowledge. 4th. A new work from her pen is in press, and will be issued very soon. It is entitled "Miss Nancy."

SCHECHIAH, (South Bend,) writes: "1st. Let me ask, which is proper, to begin your letter after the address, with a capital or with a Roman letter? I remember when a boy that this question was mooted during the literary times of Geo. Morris and Mr. Greeley, and it was then decided, I think, in favor of the Roman. 2d. Is it proper, in speaking or writing of a divine, to say Rev. Mr.?" 1st. The capital is now generally used, by scholarly writers as well as others. It *looks* best, we think, and custom has decided that it *is* best. 2d. Yes."

JENNIE writes: "Please accept my thanks for former answers. Will you give me room for a few more questions? 1st. Will either of the applications you recommended for removing the hair prove a permanent remedy, or would it grow again? 2d. Is it easy for a lady to get a situation as telegraph operator, and what salary do they command? Would my handwriting do for an operator?" 1st. If the first application were not to prove entirely efficacious a second probably would. 2d. It is not easy, but where there is a will there is generally a way. Salaries vary widely. Good operators get good pay. Your handwriting is good enough for that occupation, and for almost any other.

"CASTA DIVA," (Bergen, N. J.,) asks: "What is the true meaning of the word dessert? and is it usually properly applied?" Dessert means simply the table cleared (French *desservir*, to clear the table); and dessert is that which comes after the table is cleared. We think the ordinary use of the word in this country is proper.

LITTLE NELL, (Wilmington, Del.,) writes as an earnest letter, asking our advice upon a subject of the utmost importance to her. She says that she is attached to a worthy young man who, she believes, loves her in return. But the trouble is they are of different religious beliefs. Her family would not like her to marry outside of her own denomination; she cannot change her faith, nor can she ask her lover to. What would we advise her to do? In conclusion, she asks our opinion of her handwriting. In the first place we say that difference of religious belief need not and ought not be a bar to the marriage of persons between whom no other obstacle exists. At the same time such unions are often inadvisable, not to say perilous. Individuals must take the responsibility of their own action. If our correspondent thinks her lover's sectarianism is as strong as her own, let her be careful how she allows their intimacy to progress—their marriage could hardly prove a happy one. As to her handwriting. It is fair, but we are sorry to observe that her spelling is poor.

W. A. C., (Hampton, Washington Co., N. Y.,) asks if we know anything about the —— Association of Philadelphia, and if it is what it pretends to be. We know very little about it.

"BILLY SAWDUST," (Atlanta, Ga.,) writes: "Do you think a Juvenile Minstrel Troupe would succeed in a tour North next Spring?" We know nothing of the probabilities of success in such an enterprise. It is entirely out of our line of business—and pleasure.

T. W. B., (Townsend, Del.,) writes: "Please inform me what 37½ bushels of grain will come to at 87½ cents per bushel? This is a simple question to ask, but I have tried several ways of solving it, and find a difference in the answers of ½ of a cent. There has been quite a discussion in our neighborhood as to *the correct one*." The correct answer is $33.06¼. Reduce both sets of figures to fractions, and multiply them. So multiplying the other way, the amount will be the same—first multiply by the half, and then by 37. Your error is in multiplying the half by one-half over again, making one-fourth too much. But we do not wish to solve arithmetical difficulties in this column.

V. K., (Pittsburgh, Pa.,) writes: "1st. I have for some time been writing to a young lady, who, in turn, answered my letters, which were very interesting to me. As a result of our correspondence, I have formed a very strong attachment for her. For some cause unknown to me, she lately returned a part of my letters, without stating why she did so. Would you advise me to write to her and ask her to explain herself? 2d. How do you like my style of writing?" 1st. Yes; address her a courteous letter with that object. 2d. We are not greatly pleased with your handwriting, if that is what you mean, though it might be made a good hand. Your composition and spelling are more defective. Is not your first sentence ambiguous? or do you really mean to say that your own letters were very interesting to you?

EMMA, (Ill.,) asks: "1st. Where, and at what price, can I obtain a book called ——? 2d. What do you think of my handwriting?" 1st. Of almost any bookseller. 2d. It is fair, but not good.

HEATHER BELL, (New Albany, Ind.,) asks: "1st. Who is the best authority on sheep raising? For what price can the book be had? 2d. How is my writing, for a boy of sixteen? 3d. Which is the best commercial college near here?" 1. Youatt, perhaps. His work on Sheep Husbandry would cost you $1. 2d. Fair. 3d. We cannot say.

ORION, (Hollidaysburgh, Pa.,) asks: "1st. Who were Guilelma and Theodosia, mentioned in modern times? 2d. What is the origin of the expression, 'What will Mrs. Grundy say?'" 1st. There was a Guilelma, daughter of William Penn, and a Theodosia, daughter of Aaron Burr. Their names occur in the history of the lives of those men. 2d. The phrase is from Tom Morton's "Speed the Plow." In the first scene Mrs. Ashfield shows herself very jealous of her neighbor, Mrs. Grundy, and Farmer Ashfield says to her, "Be quiet, will you? Always dinging Mrs. Grundy into my ears. What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will Mrs. Grundy think?"

CHARLES BROWN, (Wilmington, Del.,) writes: "Please tell a subscriber how to make an æolian harp. I suppose there are different ways of making them." The most primitive way of making an æolian harp is to stretch some delicate threads or strings at the top of an open window, where the wind blowing upon them through a narrow opening will cause musical sounds to be produced. A more elaborate construction is made by using a box of thin wood. You will find the construction described in almost any "Boy's Own Book."

CONWAY, (Virginia,) asks: "Who is the author of the oft-quoted expression, 'Knowledge is power?'" It is ascribed to Bacon—but just as like as not Father Adam first said it.

W. (Virginia, Cass County, Illinois,) writes: "1st. Ever since the introduction of the correspondents' column, I have been very much interested in the same, both as a source of instruction and amusement. In the number of November 22d, 'E. W.' (Lexington, Kentucky,) asks who is the author of the couplet—

'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.'

James Montgomery is the author. The lines were misquoted; they read as the above, and the whole stanza as follows—

'The world can never give
The bliss for which we sigh;
'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die!'

2d. I have been a constant reader of your valuable paper for twenty-five years, but I do not plead that as an excuse for asking the following question: What do you think will be the result of the recent Cuban outrage?" 1st. Our correspondent will please accept our thanks for his kindness. T. S. C. Americus, Ga., also informs us that Montgomery is the author of the lines. 2d. We can only give our opinion in the matter. If war should ensue, we think the independence of Cuba would be one of its results.

MISSOURI GIRL, (Clinton City, Mo.,) asks: "1st. Where are the Tyrol mountains, and for what are they noted? 2d. Locate Dieppe and Heligoland for me." 1st. The Tyrol mountains traverse the province of Tyrol. They consist of three chains known as the Rhætian, Tyrolese or German, and the Trent Alps. The Rhætian Alps, which occupy the centre, are the loftiest, and divide the waters which flow northward to the Danube from those that run to the Adriatic or the river Drave. Several of the peaks rise to the height of over 12,000 feet. The northern and southern chains, like the central, abound in the most picturesque and beautiful scenery; lakes, glaciers, nestling valleys, charming passes and magnificent heights being features of it. The Tyrol region is noted for the character of its inhabitants. They are honest, frank, very industrious, and distinguished for the strength of their devotional feelings and their love of freedom. 2d. Dieppe is a seaport town of France on the English channel, at the mouth of the Arques, ninety-three miles from Paris. Heligoland (or Helgoland, as it is sometimes called,) is an island in the German Ocean, one hundred miles from Hamburg, and thirty-five miles from the mouth of the Elbe.

[Several letters are held over to be answered in our next.]